Ration Day at the Benevolent Asylum, ca. 1890.
CHARITY IN NEW SOUTH WALES 1850-1914:
A STUDY IN PUBLIC, PRIVATE AND STATE
PROVISIONS
FOR
THE POOR

Brian Dickey

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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My thanks for assistance beyond the call of duty must go to Mr Russell Doust and Mr Brian Stucky of the N.S.W. Archives, to Mr Bede Nairn of the A.N.U., and to Dr John Lawrence of the University of Sydney. My thanks must especially go, for counsel and encouragement, to the head of the History Department, Professor J.A. La Nauze, and to my supervisor, Dr Robin Gollan.

Nevertheless, the thesis is based on my original research, and I must accept responsibility for the whole of it.

15 December 1966

BRIAN DICKEY
SUMMARY

In 1850 charity in N.S.W. was a matter of caring for the destitute aged, the sick poor, fallen and friendless females, deserted wives and neglected or orphaned children. Most assistance was administered by public societies supported both by donations from the well-to-do in the community and by government subsidies. Charity's role was a conserving one, with minimal goals and limited vision. The motives were mixed but largely Christian. The techniques were condescending and based on assessments of moral worth.

Three main types of need attracted attention: the sick poor, neglected children and those who were simply called 'the poor'.

The colony's hospitals were its charitable institutions par excellence. They were, however, little more than places of last resort in the 1850s. By the 1870s there were signs of change, largely the product of advances in medical knowledge. By 1900, and even more so by 1914, the facilities provided in them had ceased to be limited to the mid nineteenth century objects of charity. Hospitals provided services manifestly desirable to sober middle class people. The charitable quality of the hospitals was largely disappearing.

The second group which has been discussed were the destitute and neglected children of the colony. Care for them in 1850 was custodial and institutional. The state was more deeply involved in the care of children
than with the hospitals. As well as subsidies it provided legal sanctions, and after 1866, its own reformatory and industrial schools. But in the 1870s there was a sustained barrage of criticisms against the 'barracks', which showed that attitudes towards these children were changing. The creation of the State Children's Relief Board in 1881 symbolised this increased emphasis on the needs of such children for the individual care which they could best be given in a family. It also revealed the extended involvement of the government in this field of charitable effort. With the succession of C.K. Mackellar as President of the Board in 1902, another stage was reached. Mackellar sought to expand the Board's work beyond the simply charitable, through legal and administrative effort. By 1914 a wide and complex range of services under the control of the State Children's Relief Department, as well as the efforts of the older and more conservative societies was available for these children.

The poor were the subject of much more generalised attention. An important process in the story of caring for them was that by which first one group then another was recognised as requiring special attention. Thus the aged destitute came under the care of a government board in 1862. The Benevolent Society accepted lying-in cases from the mid 1850s. In 1902 it opened the Royal Hospital for Women at Paddington for their care. Poor families and destitute people who could not appropriately be admitted to the asylums usually received outdoor relief in kind. After 1900 many of them received an old age
pension. After 1908 the permanently invalid received similar aid. Deserted wives and widows with families came under the care of the State Children's Relief Department in 1896.

By 1914 the state government's expenditure on assistance to hospitals and charitable societies was nearly £600,000. It had been perhaps £20,000 in 1855. The government had taken its place alongside the public societies as the supplier of some services; it had replaced them in others; it had made much more active efforts to reform the conditions in the environment which produced the needs which the charitable societies had sought to deal with. The societies too had accepted important re-definitions of the people to be helped, of the aid appropriate to their needs, and of their place in the community. Charity in 1914 was still an operative concept, but no longer separate from much of the rest of the life of the community. By 1914 it had very largely ceased to be a chancy, condescending affair at the Benevolent Asylum, and had become the provision of widely available, efficiently administered social services.
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ABBREVIATIONS

C.S.I.L. N.S.W. Colonial Secretary's In Letters, 1826-1934. For a discussion of the method of citation from these files which has been adopted, see my paper 'The New South Wales State Archives: A Note on Citation from the Files of the Colonial Secretary'. J.R.A.H.S. vol.52 (1966), pp.336-8.

C.S.I.L. S.B. N.S.W. Colonial Secretary's In Letters, Special Bundles

C.S.M. Colonial Secretary, Minute

A.G. & J. Attorney General and Justice Department

V. & P. N.S.W. Legislative Council, Votes and Proceedings 1842-55; N.S.W. Legislative Assembly, Votes and Proceedings 1856-

L.C., J. N.S.W. Legislative Council, Journal 1856-

N.S.W.P.P. N.S.W. Parliamentary Papers

N.S.W.P.D. N.S.W. Parliamentary Debates

C.P.P. Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers

S.R. N.S.W. Statistical Register

R.C.P.C. 1873-4 Royal Commission on Public Charities 1873-4

R.C.P.C. 1897-9 Royal Commission on Public Charities 1897-9

S.C.R. Board State Children's Relief Board

Col. Sec. Colonial Secretary
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<td>Principal Under Secretary, Col. Sec.'s Department</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Medical Adviser to the Government</td>
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H.R.A. Historical Records of Australia, Series I

M.J.A. Medical Journal of Australia.
CHAPTER 1
CHARITY AND SOCIETY IN N.S.W. ca 1850

1. Introduction

Charity has many meanings, shading from Christian love of fellow men in response to St Paul's great exhortations, through natural affection and candour to freedom from censoriousness or leniency, to beneficence, liberality and alms giving. Sometimes it carries hostile value judgements, for example in the phrase 'as cold as charity'. The various shades of meaning of the term are all conditioned by the social setting and attitudes associated with its use. To the mid twentieth century, charity seems an outmoded concept on which to build a coherent system of social security. Social services or welfare provisions are the more usual contemporary terms employed to describe the concrete community expressions of brotherly love. In the mid nineteenth century it was a much more powerful term, encompassing a considerable range of attitudes, motives and performance. Most obviously it referred to the colony's 'charitable institutions'. Their work and the use of the term charity assumed the existence of both donors and recipients, the charitable and the objects of their charity. Not all who were in need in the community fell within the range of charitable action. In the mid century the care of the mentally ill, aborigines and the unemployed was for various reasons excluded from charity's tasks. Assistance was extended to a mixed group called 'the poor', sometimes the 'deserving poor'. It was made
up of children and old people who were destitute, fallen, pregnant and deserted women (especially those with families), and the 'sick poor'.

Charity operated very much on Christian and humanitarian foundations, on attitudes and motives of love and outgoing concern which conditioned the reaction of the community to various needs as they were detected. Naturally enough it has been easier to investigate the actual provisions than to lay bare the fundamental motive forces on which these activities were based. It is an emphasis which has been expressed in the title of the thesis. Nonetheless, through a study of the provisions which were made and of the discussions which accompanied them, it is still possible to derive useful material for an understanding of these underlying forces. In this way some positive evidence of the outlook of the community of N.S.W. becomes available, gained not so much from pamphlets and sermons as from the actual practice of societies, administrators and politicians over a period of time. In the course of this investigation there has also been opportunity, occasionally, to consider the needs and outlook of the recipients of charity, the 'clients' of modern social administration. This has not been possible in great detail however, largely because of the lack of suitable source material. In the same way the administrators involved in charitable activity - the managers, visitors, secretaries and the rest - have left little evidence of their field work behind them. It has therefore not been possible to place their work in the centre of the story.
There are certain other limitations on the meaning of charity as adopted in this thesis which are the product of contemporary usage. This usage usually distinguished between the labours of public societies and those of the state. The ideas of self-government and mutual help pointed mid Victorians to the public society as the vehicle for most social action. The duties of the state in the general field of social action were to be kept separate in practice and outlook. As we shall see, this distinction was not sustained for the whole of the period of this study. By a similar distinction, the private act of charity was occasionally acknowledged and applauded. More often, however, the public was urged to channel their desire to do acts of charity into the coffers of the organised societies.

Nor did charity refer to such reforming activities as temperance, life assurance, and friendly societies, social purity campaigns, evangelistic organisations, and the range of trade union and socialist programs. These were all part of the endeavour of the society to improve itself. Most of them were conducted on the assumption that they would achieve a sufficient personal or social reformation to make the ameliorative, preservative work of charity unnecessary. Occasionally the emergence of reforming organisations can be linked with charitable activity, for example in the attention given to the

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needs of the houseless poor in Sydney in the 1860s. But the reformers did not believe they were participating in charity by promoting their various nostrums. Charity remained as the continuing, residual endeavour by which those in need could be given immediate assistance.

* * * *

The community around 1850 was simple in structure. Commercial and professional groups in Sydney, together with the labour force to maintain the services and communication functions of the colony, were joined by a range of small agriculturalists and a much more diffuse group of pastoralists possessing varying degrees of social and economic security. Politics tended to reflect these social divisions as the more conservative positions were adopted by government officials and the larger land occupiers. They were opposed in various triangular combinations by more radical elements, most of whom drew their strength from Sydney.

The 1840s had seen sustained debate on the constitutional structure of the colony, arising out of disagreements between the colonists and the imperial government over land, penal and financial policies. Out of these debates emerged a further spate of argument within the colony itself. As a wide degree of political power for the colony became a possibility, groups began to separate out, angrily critical of one another's aims and social assumptions. Conservative, liberal, radical, the modern commentator might label them; 'Government', 'Boyd' and 'Constitutional', or 'Government', 'Liberal'
and 'Agitating', contemporaries called them. The Australian Colonies Government Act of 1850 increased considerably the powers of the Legislative Council. In December 1852 not only N.S.W. but also Tasmania, South Australia and Victoria were invited to frame constitutions for responsible government.

With the advent of this more independent system of government, political life in the colony seemed to settle down to a dull round of ins and outs, as rival leaders struggled for power. Factions, rather than coherent political parties, operated the system. Their ideal was good government, by which was meant efficient

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1 R. Knight, Illiberal Liberal. Robert Lowe in New South Wales, 1842-1850, Melbourne, 1966, p.133, for these party names.

For treatments of the arguments involved, see the general statement in R. Gollan, Radical and Working Class Politics: A Study of Eastern Australia, 1850-1910, Melbourne, 1960, ch.1, which is now being expanded by more detailed studies. The political debate can be investigated in Mrs Knight's work, and in J.M. Ward, Earl Grey and the Australian Colonies, 1846-1857, A Study of Self Government and Self Interest, Melbourne, 1958, for the 1840s and early 1850s. The debate is also discussed in P. Loveday & A.W. Martin, Parliament, Factions, and Parties. The First Thirty Years of Responsible Government, 1856-1889, Melbourne, 1966, pp.10-26. Social and religious assumptions were also the subject of contemporary debate, and are now of critical study in: M. Roe, Quest for Authority in Eastern Australia, 1835-1851, Melbourne, 1965; J. Barrett, That Better Country. The Religious Aspect of Life in Eastern Australia, 1835-1850, Melbourne, 1966; T.L. Suttor, Hierarchy and Democracy in Australia, 1788-1870. The Formation of Australian Catholicism, Melbourne, 1966. These last three, though confessedly interpretative, are extremely perceptive and stimulating.
administration and the development of the colony's resources. All through the period the various groups in the community were united in believing that the government existed to serve sectional interests. Thus control of the government meant control of the distribution of the public resources. Faction leaders sought to occupy that position, and much of their support was openly based on the expectations of their followers. But for all this, men such as Cowper, Martin, and Parkes were as much concerned with constitutional propriety as with log-rolling, as much with the routine of administration as with the delicate negotiations preceding a general election.

Development was the mainspring of political policy-making. This meant making land available: the techniques to be used became a much argued political question. It meant obtaining funds for government activity; it came to mean a very large commitment to spending on railways and other public works; it did not mean a very great concern for reorganising the social or legal framework within which the community conducted itself; it also came to mean direct government control over the education of the children of the community.

1 G.A. Price is conducting an important research project at the A.N.U. on this subject.
3 A.G. Austin, Australian Education 1788-1900, Melbourne, 1961, chs.4 and 6.
The trouble was that the instability of faction politics produced a basic demoralisation in parliament. Faction leaders often failed to retain the loyalty of their followers or cabinets; supply was voted grudgingly, often piecemeal and often in arrears; bills frequently faltered in the Assembly, ending under the table instead of in the statute book; there were frequent 'scenes' which brought parliament into disrepute. The product of this instability was an unwillingness in the community to trust the politicians. The casualties in this flexible, unstable situation were coherent policies. Government initiative through legislation was at a discount for the first thirty years of responsible government in N.S.W.¹

In this context public societies, already approved as the appropriate technique for much social effort, were reinforced in their acceptance of direct responsibility for charitable activities. The government was expected to provide its annual subsidy (the bigger the better) and little more. Politicians were to keep out of charity.

By the late 1880s and early 1890s this system of faction politics was passing. New, urgent

¹ The fullest analysis of the first thirty years of N.S.W. politics is in Loveday & Martin, op. cit. It is a controversial account, as the review by N.B. Nairn in Politics vol.1, no.2 shows. It would be apparent to a reader of this book that the account above is indebted to it, but that the inefficiency and instability of the political story is emphasised here much more.
dissatisfactions were being voiced by men tired of the loose liberal ethos enunciated earlier in the century. These new demands found expression in a variety of political organisations: the Protection Union, the Free Trade and Liberal Association, Labour Electoral Leagues. They were also expressed more directly in the maritime strike of 1890, the strike at Broken Hill in 1892 and the agitation in Sydney which accompanied it, and the angry struggles for land and income tax in 1894-5. With wider bases of support stemming from a realization of the urgency of these issues and with more appropriate political machinery at their disposal, political parties became real forces in the community. Politics in the 1890s became the vehicle of coherent social and economic policies. George Reid, for instance, sought to capitalise on this situation with his taxation schemes. The labour party evolved a series of relevant policies and struggled for the power to carry them out. Social reform became the concern, not only of such political outriders as J.C. Neild, but of the government of the day. Much of this new political energy was absorbed in the federation movement. But since most questions of social care other than pensions for the aged and invalid remained the responsibility of the states after 1901, constructive schemes of social reform, or at least more direct financial aid from the government, continued to be seen as appropriate and useful government policies.

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The Lyne-See Protectionist government (1899-1904) which saw in the new century was more securely rooted in party organisation than Reid's. But the dawn of economic prosperity which the first year of the new century and of federation had brought did not last. The Progressives (as the Protectionists renamed themselves in 1901), sore pressed for funds, fell before the skilful blows of another protagonist of righteous and economical government, J.H. Carruthers. He rallied the support of middle class protestantism and flavoured it with the common coin of liberal reform. He was, as well, an able party organiser. By 1908 his liberal party had established itself securely in organisation and ideology as the one non-labour party.

By 1910 the Labour party had succeeded in creating an image for itself as the party of social justice and reform for the working classes. It escaped from the condemnation of sectarianism which had been so damaging to the Progressives. By a narrow margin, Labour came eagerly to power in 1910, to remain till 1916. Among its special problems were a narrow majority in the Assembly, a hostile Legislative Council, financial limitations imposed by the federal government, internal suspicions and then the world war and the conscription issue. Despite these restrictions it represented an important extension of community involvement in politics. It was a sign that politics had become the business of the whole community and policies the reflection of this situation.
The economic foundations of Australian history are never far from the surface.\(^1\) In this study of charity these economic changes are taken as some of the given facts of the situation. They may be briefly noted here. The contours of the Australian economy up to 1900 have been well described by Butlin.\(^2\) The N.S.W. story is part of it. It was, with the gold rushes under way no longer the most populous or the wealthiest colony. These honours for thirty years or more were possessed by Victoria. But both colonies shared the social dislocations brought by gold: families deserted, temporary shortages of skilled labour, sharp increases in the populations\(^3\) of Sydney and Melbourne and some political disturbances.

Capital formation and domestic product rose quickly from the mid 1850s to 1865, under the pressure of extreme shortage and the immediate stimulus of gold fortunes. This expansion helped to heal some of the social dislocations of the previous decade. There was a

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1 See the most useful recent statement by J. McCarty, in H. Mayer (ed), *Australian Politics: A Reader*, Melbourne, 1966, ch.1.


3 The estimated population of N.S.W. annually is tabulated in Bureau of Census and Statistics, *Demography Bulletin*, no.67, Canberra, 1949, pp.154-5, and reproduced in Table 1, below.

Population figures for Sydney are less accessible. Those given in Table 2 are from the census report of 1891 and the same *Demography Bulletin.*
recession in 1866, identified by an Australia wide fall
of 22 per cent in the volume of investment. This was
followed by halting recovery and uncertainty
culminating in another downturn in investment in 1870.
From 1871 to 1886, interrupted by very slight
recessions in 1878-9, 1882 and 1885, was the great
period of investment and economic growth. The pace
slackened after 1886 and significant decline was
noticeable by 1888. This was aggravated by a sectoral
disequilibrium in investment in the economy. Government
retrenchment, conservative lending policies, declining
export prices, less confidence in London of investment
opportunities in Australia were all symptoms of this
decline.1 The depressed economic conditions of the 1890s
were probably felt less severely in N.S.W. than in
Victoria. By 1899 it seemed that the colony was past
the worst. But the most extensive drought in two
generations imposed yet another restriction on the
recovery of the rate of economic growth. Not till about
1908 had the rhythm of the 1880s been in some measure
regained, and then with some substantial shifts in the
sectoral distribution of investment, notably towards
secondary industry. In this context, employment
opportunities at last began to improve. The symbol of
the changes was the establishment of B.H.P.'s iron and
steel industry at Newcastle in 1913. But even in 1914

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residual unemployment remained substantial.¹ Nor were the easy days of strong capital flow from London to recur. The new Commonwealth government stood between the states and complete financial autonomy. The states still controlled income taxation. But variations in receipts from the federal government were to prove an important restraint on the extension of government financed social security benefits.

These changes obviously affected the lot of the poor. It is not, however, with the economic foundations of poverty that this investigation has been concerned, but with the responses to identified needs in the society. Economic changes quickly expressed themselves, for example, in rising applications for aid at the

¹ On the rate of unemployment, see P. Macarthy, 'Labor and the living wage, 1890-1921', A.J.P.H. vol.13, no.1 (April 1967).
Benevolent Asylum\textsuperscript{1} or the Infirmary.\textsuperscript{2} Sometimes these economic changes forced a revision of the basic assumptions upon which charity was conducted. This was especially so during the depression years of the 1890s. It is in these ways that economic changes are relevant.

Another context within which to conduct this study of charity is the role of the government in the colonial community. Butlin has emphasised the importance of the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Table 6 shows the number of outdoor relief cases dealt with by the Benevolent Society. While there are problems in the construction of this table, which are discussed in the note accompanying it, the relationship between economic change and the rate of cases can still be detected. The high rate of the late 1860s and early 1870s can be linked with the uncertain economic conditions of those years which probably hit the unskilled worst. The next ten years, to 1883, show fairly static numbers. Then, in the late 1880s and in the 1890s the impact of the depression can be seen in the figure of more than 7,000 cases dealt with in 1895. With slight reductions, these high numbers persisted for nearly ten years, showing how slow was the economic recovery. (Cp. P. Macarthy, op. cit., on unemployment rates.) The fall-off in numbers in the last ten years of the period reflect changes in the distribution of the population of Sydney, allied to considerable improvements in the public health of the suburbs such as Ultimo and Chippendale which continued to supply applicants to the Society. It can also be linked with the formation of more local benevolent societies and with the impact of a growing range of social services provided by the state, including aged and invalid pensions and the grants made by the S.C.R. Department.
\item Table 4 shows the number of admissions annually to the hospitals of the colony. These move more in sympathy with changes in the size of the population than with economic changes. This is discussed in more detail in ch.5.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
public sector in the growth of the colonial economy. Loveday and Martin have discussed the relationship between the faction system and control of the executive, as has Encel in more general terms. The government was a major source of capital. It was a large employer. It supplied a considerable amount of social capital in the forms of police stations, mental hospitals, schools and the like. Much of the support for charitable institutions came from the Colonial Treasury. Later this was to be augmented by various types of direct involvement: a general hospital, residential services for aged people, medical services for children and mothers and monetary payments to aged and invalid people and to many families. Why should this be so? Why should there be this increase in direct administrative involvement? While at first sight the colonial experience appears different from that in England, closer examination shows this not to have been the case. True, much mid century doctrine was hostile to large-scale government powers or expenditure. To that extent the colonial government with its railways and schools and public works contradicted those teachings. But even in England the rule of laissez faire and economical government had never been more than a hope held by some. By 1860 the English central government was deeply committed to expenditure and regulation in public health, local government, factories, hospital services and some types of child care. As in N.S.W. these activities grew and

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1 S. Encel, 'The Concept of the State in Australian Politics', *A.J.P.H.* vol.6 (1960), pp.62-76.
extended in scope and intensity. It is not the
uniqueness of the colonial case, therefore, but the
particular expressions of this process of government
growth that is to be considered.

It must also be noted that these sixty years were a
period of considerable technical change which was
reflected in charitable activity, especially in the
practice of medicine. Anaesthetics, antiseptics,
nursing, a wider range of surgery attendant on these
developments as well as improvements in equipment,
X rays, pathological examinations, physiotherapy were
all innovations of this period. These technical
innovations were to bring an important change in
outlook towards the hospitals. The impact of improved
communication was more diffuse. But it certainly tied
the community together more closely. It made it easier
for deserted children or destitute old men to be moved
to Sydney for care. This emphasised the centralised,
Sydney-focused, aspect of institutional charity which
is so apparent for most of the period. Techniques of
out-door relief, on the other hand, changed little:
except that many in 1914 received their pensions by money
order at the local post office. By 1914 the care of
children had also become more scientific: concepts such
as mental retardation, the impact of physical
handicaps and teaching methods were receiving attention
and affecting charitable activity by helping in the
revision of mid nineteenth century moral evaluations on
which that effort had been based.

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Two main documentary sources have been used in this study. The Benevolent Society of New South Wales has deposited about 140 volumes of its minutes and other items with the Mitchell Library. These allow the largest charitable institution in the colony to be watched at its policy making and administrative levels for the whole period. Even more rewarding were the files of the N.S.W. Colonial Secretary’s Office, held by the N.S.W. Archives Authority. These yielded a great deal of information on the workings of charity because it was the Colonial Secretary and his subordinate officers who controlled most of the government money spent on charitable activities during this period.¹ The papers add a valuable dimension to a phase of social history otherwise dominated by sensational newspaper accounts or self-laudatory annual reports produced by the societies.

There are weak areas in these sources. One is the absence of any internal evidence on the life of the Roman Catholic charities. It would be a study in itself to locate papers on these and tell their story. For many of the public charities there is no surviving information beyond what is available in the annual returns in the Statistical Registers. This is especially true of the hospitals. There is also a lack of

¹ A list of the titles of the special bundles from this series used is given in the bibliography. For a discussion of the method by which the C.S.I.L. files have been cited, see my paper 'The New South Wales Archives: A Note on Citation from the Files of the Colonial Secretary', J.R.A.H.S. vol.52 (1966), pp.336-8; also published in Archives and Manuscripts vol.3, no.2 (May 1966), pp.15-6.
satisfactory material through which to understand some of the leading charitable policy makers and administrators. Of Allen, Renwick, the Maxted brothers, Ardill and Mackellar, for example, only the last was articulate and public enough to allow a full consideration of his ideas. There is a published biographical sketch of George Allen based on his journals. But in any case he was not a complicated man. Arthur Renwick seems to have left nothing. Little is known of the Maxted brothers. All appear in the body of the argument. They have been assessed largely within the context of the particular issues involved. This sheds some light on them: would there were more.

There are a number of useful public inquiries bearing on charitable activity. Most will be noticed in the narrative which follows. Two of them dominate the published sources. These are the Royal Commissions on Public Charities of 1873-4 and 1897-9. The former was appointed by the Parkes government in May 1873. Its first report is dated 10 September 1873, and its second 27 May 1874. Its chairman, William Windeyer, was a lawyer, a political supporter of Parkes, and a professed Liberal in political theory. He was a justice of the Supreme Court from 1879 to 1896. The other members of the commission were drawn from the ranks of Sydney politicians and merchants. The two reports were written by Windeyer and reflect his humane interest in the welfare of the poor. Advanced for his time, his ideas

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were nonetheless suffused with mid Victorian assumptions of the permanent existence of the poor and of the duty of the more well-to-do to help them. The evidence taken covered the colony's charities comprehensively. The reports concentrated on the affairs of the Sydney Infirmary and the need for the boarding-out of children instead of housing them in 'barracks'. In both these fields fairly prompt action was taken in accordance with the recommendations of the Commission.

The second inquiry, 25 years later, provides another useful point at which to pause in the discussion. This commission grew out of two different problems. During 1897 allegations of maladministration and corruption were made about the affairs of the Strathfield Blind Institute. Two members of the Public Service Board were appointed as a Royal Commission to investigate it. The Public Service Board (set up with considerable powers under the act passed in 1895) was meanwhile working its way through the whole government administration in search of areas of inefficiency. Arising out of the investigation into the Blind Institute the Reid cabinet directed the same two members of the Board to carry out a similar assessment of those charitable institutions and societies receiving public subsidy, with the powers of a Royal Commission.

Apart from that on the Blind Institute, they presented five reports, including a summary. The first was on organisations for the blind, the deaf and the dumb. The second was on the Benevolent Society of N.S.W. This was followed by reports on the remaining
benevolent societies and on the hospitals of the colony. For these last two phases two additional commissioners were appointed, Critchett Walker, Principal Under Secretary, and F. Norton Manning, Inspector General of the Insane. The Commission cried off reporting on the administration of grants to aborigines, the support of state children and the working of the Government Asylums for the Infirm and Destitute.\footnote{1}

While offering some useful historical background, the reports concentrated on matters of financial practice. They made a few general suggestions about the government's administration of the charities vote. They were critical of some organisations, but in the detailed manner of careful accountants. Unlike the Windeyer report there was no overriding argument, no argument basic to their work - except the demand for efficient use of government funds. They were a sign and a portent of the changing government outlook towards public charities.\footnote{2}

\footnote{1}{The asylums were reported on by Dr Williamson, Superintendent of the Gladesville Hospital for the Insane, at the request of the Public Service Board. This report has survived.}

\footnote{2}{The two commissions have been cited in the form R.C.P.C. 1873-4 and R.C.P.C. 1897-9. The reports of the former were published in \textit{V. \& P.} 1873-4, vol.1, p.1 \textit{passim}. The reports of the latter were spread over \textit{V. \& P.} 1898 (1st session), vol.3, pp.1231-1243 (Strathfield). pp.1245-1340 (blind etc generally).

(2nd session), pp. 397-544 (B.S.).

1899 pp. 465-720 (hospitals).

(3rd session), vol.5, pp. 191-274 (other benevolent societies). pp. 721ff. (summary).}
Of previous work which helped, hindered or stimulated this thesis, there is not much bearing directly on charity in N.S.W. Dr Dora Peyser published a long paper in 1939.¹ It was written largely from the Historical Records of Australia and the two Royal Commissions on Public Charities. She had access to some of the minutes of the Benevolent Society. As Dr Peyser herself admitted, it was a pioneering paper. There was little concern to place the work of the institutions described in the community, or to examine the motivation of the groups providing the charitable services involved. The documentation of the paper is not satisfactory. There are several mis-statements of fact.

T. Kewley, in studying Commonwealth social service benefits, found it necessary to fill in the origins, in N.S.W., of the pension for the aged.² This threw considerable light on the practice of charitable relief around the turn of the century. On this earlier work he has now built, in publishing his detailed study of the development of these Commonwealth benefits.³

In 1951 Elizabeth Govan submitted a carefully argued study of child welfare provisions in N.S.W. from 1788 to 1887 as a Ph.D. thesis to the University of Chicago. Unlike Peyser, she was concerned as much with motive and quality as with the volume and extent of the provisions made. This important study has made the task lighter in considering the internal working of the institutions providing child care. There is little in it with which one wishes to disagree. It has been used as a basis for further study.

In 1957 J.F. Cairns submitted a much more argumentative thesis. Arguing from the standpoint of the 1950s and convinced that the 'welfare state' had arrived in Australia, Cairns made some stimulating historical generalisations as well as some sweeping contemporary judgements. Through his study the problem of the doctrinal basis and the quality of the provisions made for those in need in the nineteenth century community has clearly been raised.

Other works which have added to our understanding of the nineteenth century social outlook include the study by K. Inglis of the Royal Melbourne Hospital, and

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the earlier histories of Sydney and Prince Alfred Hospitals. While all three give detailed attention to the affairs of a particular institution, Professor Inglis has written with characteristic imagination and insight on the general question of colonial attitudes towards charity and social welfare. This thesis takes up the general challenge implied by his lone study. It is good to know that the Benevolent Society is currently the subject of a similar detailed examination.

The English context for the labours of colonial philanthropists and their historians is at last gaining sensitive and stimulating delineation. The Webbs and the Hammonds represent two earlier generations of involvement and investigation. The recent growth of interest in the 'nineteenth century revolution in government' reflects the interest of many scholars, not only in the dynamics of government growth, but also in

1
K. Inglis, Hospital and Community: A History of the Royal Melbourne Hospital, Melbourne, 1958; W. Epps, The Story of an Australian Hospital, being the jubilee history of the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney, Sydney, 1921; F. Watson, The History of the Sydney Hospital from 1811 to 1911, Sydney, 1911.

2
By Noel Gash, who hopes to present his work for the degree of M.A. in the University of Sydney early in 1967. Inter-colonial speculations which come to mind must wait further detailed study. The vigorous examination of Melbourne's charity organisation movement is an important contribution: R.E.W. Kennedy, 'The Charity Organisation Movement in Melbourne, 1887-1897,' M.A. thesis, University of Melbourne, 1967. [To be submitted]. I must thank Mr Kennedy for access to his draft.
the content of that expanding government activity. So often the administration with which these scholars have been concerned has been social administration. The immigrant trade, public health and local government are the most notable published examples.¹ To these we can add Brian Abel-Smith's studies of the nursing profession and of the hospitals, focused as they are on the doctrines involved and on the range of services provided.² W.L. Burn has attempted to characterise the quality of the mid Victorian generation for whom charity was such an important responsibility.³ David Owen has presented a panoramic and heroic study in his English Philanthropy,


which is largely concerned with the nineteenth century.

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It is the contention of this thesis that the doctrines and practice of charity are worth teasing out as a contribution to our understanding of the society in which it was conducted. The focus is on the processes by which the charitable provisions of the mid century community were extended and varied, on an assessment of these provisions, and on the attitudes of the community towards them. Sometimes the extensions were the product of sheer growth in numbers involved. Sometimes the changes were in response to the impact of changing economic conditions. Opinion was sometimes affected by the actual administration of charitable provisions - usually the result of some sharp newspaper reporter's visit to an institution, but sometimes more constructively the work of administrators themselves. Technical advances played their part, as did changing ideas on society which occasionally reached as far as the practice and precept of charity.

What began as a preservative and ameliorative concern for the 'poor' by the upper classes of a 1

For some interesting criticisms of this book, see the article by Brian Harrison, 'Philanthropy and the Victorians,' V.S. vol.9 (1966), pp.353-74. On balance, I prefer Professor Owen's narrower definition of charity to that advocated by Dr Harrison.
relatively simple society concluded as a conscious commitment by the state as well as a wide variety of service organisations to support the welfare of a much more broadly defined group of people recognised as needing community assistance.

It should be apparent what this thesis is not attempting to do. It is not intended to explain the causes of poverty, but rather to take such matters, for example downturns in economic growth, as given factors in the situation. Some charitable endeavours have been omitted - for lack of evidence, or because it is sufficient that they are statistics in the tables. Some problems now usually thought of under the rubric of social welfare have not been examined because they were not considered to fall into the province of charity during the period of study. The process by which some of these services as well as those thought of as charitable did come to be grouped together is an important study. There is some evidence of the beginnings of this process after 1900. This has been noticed in the last two chapters. The geographic focus of the story is on Sydney. This results from the limitations of source material outside Sydney and from the concentration of facilities and decisions in and around the colony's capital.

2. **The poor in the N.S.W. community**

To the socially conservative, the years around 1850 were years of challenge. Men such as Boyd, Macarthur and Wentworth sought to create a society dominated by
their large holdings and worked by their tenants. They 'were not simply aspiring to colonial titles and increased social prestige. Status and rank were to them part of the essential fabric of a stable society fit to enter upon a career of virtual independence and self-government'. In Sydney the working men took a different view of social and economic opportunity. For them success lay through honest work and self-improvement, through temperate behaviour and frugal habits. Of course, most in the colony recommended such virtues: they were the virtues of Victorian progress, they were the virtues of survival in a frontier community, they were the antithesis of the evil code of the convicts, whose very name the community sought to avoid. While there was conflict over the shape of the political, economic or social future - over the size of land holdings, or the possession of political privilege - these arguments had little bearing on the accepted doctrine of the virtues best suited to the improvement of the poorer classes in the community. All agreed that for them the road to security was that of earnest, honest endeavour. They were doctrines learnt in England and applied with even greater point in N.S.W.

When faced with the existence of the poor in the mid century colony, the responses of community spokesmen were various. Some condemned imperial immigration

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1 Loveday & Martin, op. cit., p.10ff.
2 Knight, op. cit., pp.247-8 on the hostility to the word 'convict'.

policies. Others called for public works to expand opportunities for employment. There were always opponents of such interventionist programs. Robert Lowe gave a classic if tactless laissez faire answer in December 1848. But poor, destitute people there were, whose earning capacity had fallen below the point where they could survive without assistance. Contemporary analyses sometimes concentrated on such issues of policy, especially with respect to the unemployment and poverty of able-bodied men. The passive response was given by S. Donaldson in a debate on aid for the unemployed in April 1858. He opposed spending government money in sending men to the interior. It was against the principles of political economy. He even denied that there was a shortage of work. But the proposal of the premier, Charles Cowper, and the context from which it emerged was equally characteristic. What is more, it was to become the usual government response for the next thirty years. As premier he had to deal with the pressures of public opinion as expressed in deputations of men seeking work. It was difficult for the government to refuse. So, Cowper told the Assembly, he took steps to assure himself of the bona fides of the men seeking assistance. He found at least 500 cases where men were out of work through no fault of their own. He now sought from the Assembly authority to spend government funds in sending these men to the interior.

1 Knight, op. cit., pp.210-11.
2 S.M.H., 30 April 1858.
This conviction that employment existed in country districts was also to persist. Most efforts to provide for the unemployed till 1890 consisted in sending men to the country. That the existence of employment, in city or country, depended in many ways on the efforts of the government was a fact not lost sight of by administrators and politicians in these years either. It became a basic determining factor in the efforts of successive administrations to obtain finance and spend it on developmental projects such as railway construction that these works would provide a continuing demand for employment in the colony.¹ But, and here was the essential limiting qualification common to the thinking of all the politicians, this government assistance for the unemployed 'must', as Cowper said, 'partake as little as possible of the character of pauper relief'. The assistance afforded was to be structural, providing the necessary framework by which a man could recover his position by diligent labour.

More usually than such a discussion of the incidence of unemployment as a cause of poverty, colonists in the mid century tended to emphasise individual, moral reasons for poverty. They pointed to over-much alcohol above all. Immorality, sexual depravity, too, was a matter which could be sheeted home to the poor themselves. Others were said to be simply improvident, failing to make proper provision for the contingencies of sickness, old age or an increase in family size. And behind these

¹ The principal theme of P.N. Lamb, op. cit.
personal, moral failures lay the dark shadow of convictism. Polite people in N.S.W. in the 1840s and 1850s tried hard to avoid discussing the 'System'. When it came to explaining poverty, contemporaries pointed out that many destitute in the colony had come to it as convicts. But this did not absolve such people from blame for their destitution. Their transportation itself was a punishment for previous transgression. The colony held out opportunities to those who would grasp them, be they bond or free. So their present poverty was still a matter of condemnation.

But it was also agreed that there were unfortunate and unwilling victims of degraded, lawless behaviour, who, like the principals, had been reduced to poverty and who needed help. An intemperate husband could leave a family destitute and defenceless. Savage injury could maim a man and destroy his spirit. These were the colony's 'deserving poor'. They were given a much more tender reception than the dissolute. Thus the restrictions on admissions of pauper patients at the Infirmary were weakened. This practice in the long run was to erode the whole concept of a 'sick pauper'. Even the able-bodied were helped in an emergency. At the depth of the depression of 1842-3 the government stepped in with extra funds to be distributed to the needy by the Benevolent Society.¹ Laissez faire theorists argued that

¹ B.S. A.R. 1842-3.
this action was not to be taken as a precedent.\footnote{K. Davies, 'The Relief of Social Distress in N.S.W., 1831-1851,' M.A. thesis, University of Sydney, 1955, p.67 and nn.118-9.} For the most part, Lowe's optimistic analysis of the economic opportunities available to the able-bodied was accepted.

Yet the streets of Sydney were often peopled with orphans and beggars. The Benevolent Asylum was dispensing outdoor aid regularly and steadily accumulating inmates. The Infirmary did not lack applicants for treatment. Certainly, unrestrained charity to the poor was frowned on. Mendicity was to be discountenanced, lest begging be approved in a community which placed such store on honest self-improvement. Since there were still people who manifestly needed assistance if they were to stay alive, then provision for them was necessary. Even while the prophets of laissez faire called for yet more self-improvement, others recalled Christ's words that 'you have the poor among you always'. But it was a difficult business to make the necessary distinctions:

The objection to the Refuge \[the Destitute Children's Asylum\], that it would lessen the remorse of those who desert their children, is probably founded in fact. Such would be the inevitable abuse of social benevolence. In dealing with evils of this class, however, we can never hope to escape inconveniences. The base and worthless always participate in the benefits of industry and sobriety, exhibited by others. It is impossible to rescue an innocent child, or to relieve a deserted wife, or to succour a diseased drunkard, or to shelter a dying profligate, without
diminishing to some extent the terrors of wrongdoing. But it seems to be the province of benevolence to stretch its hand forth for the succour of misery, and to leave the punishment of the wicked to the Almighty, wherever it is not prescribed by human laws.¹

If anything charity erred on the side of generosity.

There were people who were suffering acutely from poverty. Their resources had, over a period of time, fallen seriously short of the resources commanded by the average individual or family in the community.² This relative deprivation suffered by some was what contemporaries could observe, even if their explanations of it were clumsy. This is what attracted their attention. Whatever the cause, the needs required attention. The factors they acknowledged need to be expanded by reference to the impact of the convict population. It was the largest single determinant in producing destitution: orphans and illegitimate children, crippled old men, prostitutes in need of shelter and reform, families deserted by dissolute fathers, inmates of the lunatic asylums. These people gave a particular, colonial, edge to the more general social problems of ageing and economic fluctuations. Then there was the colonial environment itself. Harsh and lonely as many found it, the problems it posed served to underline yet other general social problems: few families had grown in

¹ S.M.H., 6 August 1855 (ed.)
complexity in the new land to the point where older members could be protected and immediate crises dealt with from their own resources. As yet the family structure of the colony was simple, indeed exiguous. When confronted by the crisis of the gold rushes it was strained to the limit.

So for moral or structural reasons, for obvious or inscrutable reasons, there were poor in the land. Optimists thundered, but a considerable number of people in the community were to be found providing some care and protection for these people.

3. **Provisions made and responsibilities accepted**

If there were poor in the community, what provisions were made for their welfare in the mid century? In what ways were they identified as needing assistance and what were they given? What charitable provisions were there in the colony about 1850?

The objects of the Benevolent Society, first formulated in 1818 and unchanged till 1878, were

...to relieve the poor, the distressed and the aged, and thereby discountenance, as much as possible, mendicity and vagrancy, and to encourage industrious habits among the indigent, as well as to afford them religious instruction and consolation in their distress.¹

This left it with a broad responsibility for the poor of Sydney and even less precisely, for the poor of the whole

¹ Quoted in each A.R. of the Society.
colony. The Benevolent Society was, in effect, the colony's residual charity, dispensing both indoor and outdoor assistance to a wide variety of people. It received men and women chronically ill, or old and decrepit, and thus unable to earn a living. It provided for destitute families and pregnant women. It distributed outdoor relief.

The most obvious group being cared for were the destitute aged, men and women. Till mid 1851 they were all crammed into the asylum building erected in 1820 on a large block bounded by Pitt and Devonshire Streets. In December 1850 there were 437 inmates, most of them in this category, housed in the building. In the asylum there was little for them to do. In any case only the aged and incompetent resorted to the asylum. The usual progression was a decline in body and mind till they became bed-ridden, smelly and incontinent, caring for one another as best they could, with the assistance of some of the less decrepit women who were also finding refuge in the asylum. Finally they died in the asylum. It was a fairly negative, custodial role which the society had accepted in caring for these people.

The asylum was virtually the only available shelter for unmarried, destitute women awaiting their

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1 Since Sydney Railway Station now occupies the site, and since the line of Devonshire Street is perpetuated by the long pedestrian tunnel, the asylum building must have been approximately on the site of the present no.1 platform, but on a level with Railway Square.

2 A.R. 1850.
confinement, and for women with families who had been deserted, as well as for such older women as one who found asylum there 'because she cannot keep sober out of it'.¹ Nor can there be much doubt that the asylum was a refuge for prostitutes down on their luck, or just pregnant. There was nothing very revolutionary or even constructive about this. Most of the mid-century testimony of community leaders was passive towards the problems implied by the appeals for assistance from these women. Desertion was to be regretted, so was seduction. Drink was campaigned against and dissolute living frowned upon. But in the last resort the facilities of the asylum were still made available.

Some families, instead of being admitted to the asylum, were granted weekly outdoor relief in kind after an examination by the Acting Committee.² The practice of granting such outdoor relief, continuing perhaps from the 1820s and at least from the depression of 1842, was regularised by a General Committee decision of 1851 which directed that outdoor relief would only be granted to widows or deserted wives with young children who had no regular means of support, and to families where the

¹ Board of Inquiry into the Benevolent Society and Asylum for Destitute Children, p.6; V. & P. 1855, vol.1, pp.981ff.
² This was the name of the executive committee appointed by and from the larger General Committee. The Acting Committee met weekly, the General Committee quarterly. There was also a House Committee. From the 1880s the General Committee was called the Board of Directors.
while single husband was sick and unable to work. While single cases were still granted aid the committee preferred to offer these the shelter of the asylum if they were satisfied they could not earn a living: that is unless, like Ann Lewis, they were struck off the books because 'the Visitor having reported that this woman was a drunken, dissolute character'. If successful in their application for outdoor relief, these people received rations on a sliding scale. 'Two and two', that is two pounds of meat and two four pound loaves of bread with perhaps a few small extras such as sugar and tea, was granted to a woman with one child for one week. The scale rose for each two children to a maximum of 'six and six', as the phrase ran in the minutes of the Acting Committee, which met on Tuesdays to hear applications. Ration Day at the asylum followed on Wednesdays. It was a hard, minimal ration for destitute families. It might have secured a few an easy existence. The stories of most of those which are recorded in the minutes appear abject, heart rending cases of poverty and distress. The frontispiece to this thesis tells the same story.

There were two 'female refuges' which took a more positive approach to the problem of fallen women than the Benevolent Society close by. Both the Protestant Sydney Female Refuge and the Roman Catholic House of the

1 B.S. Acting Committee, minutes 1851-2, p. 274.
2 Ibid., 11 November 1851.
Good Shepherd were founded in 1848 and 'had the same benevolent object in view, that of reclaiming frail and fallen fellow females'.¹ Both were small residential institutions providing laundering work for penitent prostitutes as a means of honest livelihood. As far as can be discovered, the mid Victorian use of the term penitent meant a prostitute who sought admittance to a refuge of this sort. There is no suggestion that any further acts of penitence were required of the women. Their continued residence in the refuge was the necessary and sufficient evidence of their penitence. That, however, there were large numbers listed in the annual reports of the Sydney Female Refuge as 'dismissed' or 'left without permission' suggests, not only that the two institutions had little success in reclaiming women from the streets, but also that some internal discipline was applied. The term clearly begs the question of the reality of the reformation involved. Still, here were efforts at reclamation which represented an awareness that alternatives ought to be offered such women, alternatives which included the comforts and stimuli of religion as they washed and ironed or went out to serve

¹ Archdeacon McEncroe to James Comrie, Hon. Sec., Sydney Female Refuge, 2 December 1856, encl. in C.S.I.L. 56/9162. The two refuges were granted adjacent premises in the 'Carters Barracks' complex of buildings a little to the east of the Benevolent Asylum, facing Pitt street. For the 'Good Shepherd', later the House of the Good Samaritan, see The Wheeling Years [Sydney, 1957], which is a history of the order of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan in Australia.
as domestics in the situations found for them by the committees.

Outside Sydney the poor could expect little institutional assistance in 1850. There are references to benevolent societies in a few centres - Penrith, Queanbeyan, Windsor, Maitland, Goulburn, and perhaps one or two more. None had been in existence for more than a few years, and most were concentrating on hospital care. For the rest we must assume neighbourly care, paternal support by the large proprietors, or the release of death.

Little was done for destitute children, deprived of normal family life. Perhaps the labour-hungry colony had few such children. Some of them were reared within the protective walls of the Benevolent Asylum by their mothers, or by other inmates if the children were foundlings deposited at the asylum's doorstep. Then there were the two orphan schools, one protestant and one

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1 The first official list of charitable institutions in the colony was made for the Blue Book returns of 1855. There were:

- hospitals at Sydney, Parramatta, Windsor, Goulburn, Yass, Bathurst, Newcastle, Maitland, Brisbane, Tamworth, Armidale, Port Macquarie.
- benevolent societies at Sydney, Liverpool, Parramatta, Penrith, Patrick's Plains (Singleton), Tamworth.
- Other institutions, all in or near Sydney, were:
  - the lunatic asylums at Parramatta and Tarban Creek,
  - the House of the Good Shepherd and the Female Refuge,
  - the Asylum for Destitute Children, the Female School of Industry and the two Orphan Schools.

Roman Catholic, both located near Parramatta. Orphans were the most vulnerable and most obvious group of deprived children, especially in the colonial setting, so bare of family structure.

As early as 1803 Governor King had established the first orphan school. About 250 boys and girls lived in each school by 1850. Both were supported by the government. Neither was effectively supervised by a committee. Both schools had meagre teaching staffs, miserable living conditions and a dulling, dispiriting effect on the children. The School Commissioners, appointed by the government in 1855 to report on the whole school system, noted inadequacies of sewerage, nominal supervision at night, feeding conditions requiring some or all of the children to eat standing, and only with spoons, a marked disinclination to wear shoes and stockings, the dull repetition of drab institutional clothing, a general exclusion from the outside world and a lack of constructive effort to educate the children into any trade or skill.¹

For all this, perhaps the two schools were an advance on the bare idea of herding the children into the general poor house, still too often the typical English procedure. The quality of the teaching, and of the life generally suggests little more was hoped for than to keep the children under care till they were old enough to be placed out as farm labourers or domestics.

A well defined social structure was assumed in conducting the schools. Only a few, more enlightened than the rest, argued that the schools could provide 'not merely bodily support, but all the civilizing influences of a comfortable and virtuous home, the instructions of a school, the consolations or religion, and everything that could compensate for the loss of a parent's care'. This was a statement of aim far above mid century practice. It suggests a capacity to question the easy dismissal of these 'unfortunate paupers' from the concern of any but their immediate superiors. As the years went by this enlightened outlook formulated here by William Wilkins was to receive increasing support. The work of the orphan schools is not pursued further in this thesis. Their internal life has been well surveyed. Though increasingly anomalous in the colony's educational system, they persisted for another generation till swept away, victims of the onslaught against the 'barrack system' which they so succinctly characterised.

One other institution existed for the care of destitute children, the Female School of Industry. Founded by Mrs Darling in 1827, it was a small establishment for 40 female boarders, Anglican in

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2 By Elizabeth S.L. Govan, op. cit., ch.2.
religion, which provided instruction for members of the lower orders placed there by arrangement. The members of the committee controlled both admission to the school and placement afterwards. It was, like the orphan schools, an institution clearly shaped within a well defined social hierarchy. The school was little more than a system for ensuring a regular supply of trained domestic help for the governor's lady and her friends. It was a revealing expression of the pessimistic ethos of conservative colonists who only looked for faithful service from the lower orders. It was still operating in the 1920s, and still patronised by the governor's wife.¹ Mercifully, it has now disappeared from the community scene, nor is it intended to pursue its career in this thesis.

For the sick, or more accurately the sick poor, provisions in the colony around 1850 were somewhat more extensive although this is not to claim for the hospitals much in the way of skill. Hospitals were for the sick poor. Poverty as much as illness was the qualification for admission. The doctors who served the more well-to-do members of the community in their homes for fees gave their services to the poor without charge in the public hospitals, as honorary surgeons and physicians. This was their charitable contribution, just as others gave money or goods. It was assumed by all, and it was a plain fact of mid Victorian life, that the hospital was a place of last resort for those who had no family

¹ A broken series of A.R.s of this society are in M.L.
or friends able to provide a better venue for medical treatment. These were the friendless sick, the poor sick, the nomads, the itinerant, the bachelors. Florence Nightingale's assessment of 1858 can safely be applied to the hospitals of the colony:

It may seem a strange principle to enunciate as the very first requirement in a Hospital that it should do the sick no harm...[and yet] the actual mortality in hospitals, especially those in large crowded cities, is very much higher than any calculation founded on mortality of the same class of patient treated out of hospital would lead us to expect.¹

Yet for all that, these were the 'Charitable Institutions' of the colony par excellence, for which the spirit of charity was most fulsomely and most frequently invoked by the organs of public opinion.

Charitable involvement in the care of the sick poor of the colony expanded in two main stages in the 1840s. The charitable Dispensary, established in Sydney in 1826, was invited by Governor Gipps to take over the southern wing² of the General Hospital in Macquarie Street, there to care for free settlers who were currently receiving treatment at nominal charge in the

² Now the 'Mint Building'.

Matters moved slowly. The Dispensary was incorporated by a local act in 1843, as the Sydney Infirmary and Dispensary. The Infirmary began operations in the south wing on 3 July 1845. The deed of grant for the site was approved in 1846.

In this arrangement, as with Gipps' negotiations with charitable groups in out centres where convict hospitals existed, or where, as at Melbourne, public medical facilities of any sort were non-existent, the ruling principle was that 'I cannot consider it the business of Government to provide a General Hospital for the District of Port Phillip or even for the town of Melbourne. Such institutions are the objects of private charity!' Behind this call for local groups to help themselves, perhaps aided by a government donation or the use of facilities vacated by the medical service lay the pressure of the imperial authorities for a reduction in expenses in the colony as the convict establishment gradually ran down. Gipps was, moreover, confronted with an economic recession which left even less money from local revenue for

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1 E.H. Stokes, The Jubilee Book of the Sydney Hospital Clinical School, Sydney, 1960, p.11. Cp. Gipps to Russell, 1 October 1841, H.R.A., vol.21, p.527, which shows that it was costing the imperial government 1/9 per head per day for each patient.

2 J.F. Watson, op. cit., p.84.

3 Gipps' minute on La Trobe's first appeal for government aid in establishing a hospital in Melbourne, written late in 1840, quoted by K. Inglis, op. cit., p.5; cp. Col. Sec. to Superintendant, Port Phillip District (La Trobe), 20 November 1844, in V. & P., 1844, vol.1, p.295.
government action than ever before. If free care had previously been given to settlers in the government hospitals, it had been an act of Christian grace in a small community where such facilities were desperately scarce. As the number of convicts in the colony fell it became possible to set about the creation of a more normal relationship between the government and the settlers, normal that is to mid nineteenth century administrators nurtured on economical government and laissez faire.

The second stage in Sydney was quite predictable. With the virtual disappearance of the convict system in N.S.W. by 1848, the remainder of the medical establishment was disbanded. The General Hospital was no longer needed. But there were 25 free settler patients in it receiving medical treatment at government expense. The Sydney Infirmary next door was asked to take care of these and any other settlers similarly classified as entitled to free treatment at government expense. The Infirmary authorities requested that in return they be granted the large centre wing of the hospital buildings. In these premises they were willing to treat 'pauper patients and convicts' presenting a government admission order from the Colonial Secretary's office. This proposal was accepted on the basis that the southern wing

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1 Cf. A.D.B., vol.1, 'Gipps'.
reverted to the Crown, and that only actual expenses incurred in treating these patients be chargeable to the Colonial Treasury.\(^1\)

This meant that the Infirmary board gained a very strong financial relationship with the government, which they did not hesitate to develop to the advantage of their institution. To its users this made little difference. In emergency cases, no questions were asked about capacity to pay. Applicants for admission under more ordinary circumstances were required to present an admission order from a subscriber certifying that they were in 'necessitous circumstances and unable to pay for medicine and medical advice', or one from the Colonial Secretary's office.\(^2\) The Infirmary was therefore a public hospital in the English sense,\(^3\) but with a local variant. The government also had access to its beds, officially as a subscriber, but also in practice as the main source of capital and running expenses. With little check on their operations, the board conducted the hospital as a public corporation. It was an essential compromise in a frontier community little able to multiply either the social capital

\(^1\) C.S.I.L. S.B. 'Correspondence between the Colonial Secretary and Sydney Infirmary, 1848', 4/810, especially that encl. in 72/4753. The daily charge agreed on was 1/- per head.

\(^2\) The system was described to the R.C.P.C. 1873-4, by Dr Halkett, one of the resident surgeons, on 14 May 1873, qq.1820-40.

\(^3\) As described by B. Abel-Smith, The Hospitals, 1800-1948, chs.2 and 3.
implied by a dual hospital system, or the administrative manpower required to conduct it.

Provision for the sick in the country districts was less generously supported by the government. The transfer of responsibility achieved so slowly and ambiguously in Sydney between 1841 and 1850 was more rapidly executed at Windsor, Bathurst, and Goulburn.¹ At Moreton Bay a relationship similar to that in Sydney was worked out.² Where no existing buildings were available, the provision of free medical services beyond the resources a doctor might be able to offer in his own home was more difficult. For example, at Penrith a Dispensary and Benevolent Society was established in 1846, with the broad aims of providing medical relief and comforts, and supporting the aged, destitute and infirm. By 1860 a hospital conducted by the Penrith District Hospital and Benevolent Society had emerged in its place.³ At Queanbeyan a similar

¹ Gipps to Russell, 1 October 1841; 'Correspondence re Maitland and Melbourne Hospitals', V. & P. 1844, vol.1, pp.293-5.
² D. Gordon, "The Waiting Years" - 1842 to 1859', M.J.A. 12 February 1966, pp.249-53; the remainder of this lecture by the head of the Department of Social and Preventive Medicine at the University of Queensland on medicine in the Moreton Bay District, 1842-59, is reprinted in M.J.A. 19 and 26 February 1966.
transformation was in progress, to the detriment of the welfare of a few old men who had previously received asylum from the Benevolent Society there. ¹

There was an obvious utility in providing the means by which labourers could regain their strength or sight. Provision for the sick, though primitive, was an early response to community needs in country districts. Once established, with a variable mixture of squatters, agriculturalists, bankers and shopkeepers on their boards, these 'hospitals' set about raising funds locally and pressing the government in Sydney for pound for pound subsidies. In none of them, not even the Sydney Infirmary, could the quality of care be admired.

4. The springs of charity

Considering what provisions were made in the mid-century colony for the needs of the less fortunate raises the problem of motive. It should not be forgotten that the colony was an outpost of Victorian civilisation. Perhaps by 1914 some significant divergences in outlook and practice had emerged between English and New South Wales philanthropy. But in 1850

¹ In 1847 the Benevolent Society provided for 'destitute and infirm', in 1850 for 'sick and destitute'; in 1860 the 'Queanbeyan District Hospital Society' replaced the earlier institution. Relief to Poor Persons, Correspondence, V. & P. 1861-2, vol.1, pp.987-1005. For the early struggles of the Melbourne Hospital, see K. Inglis, op. cit., ch.1.
received English traditions dominated the local charitable scene.\(^1\) While there was debate in the colony on the bases for authority and on the fundamental values on which the social and political structure should be built during the 1850s, it had little effect on the conduct of charity. This was a field of social endeavour which did not attract the attention of the progressives, with the possible exception of Henry Parkes. They looked eagerly for political and economic power. Charity was a residual responsibility left to those who cared. Working men on the make, themselves escaping from poverty in the old world, had little to spare for those still in need. The active task fell by default into the hands of the more conservative, who probably were more ready to recognise that the poor existed (sometimes itself a difficult act of social perception) and that it was their duty to care for them. And after all, charity was a conserving activity, a rescue operation which some might argue was peculiarly the preserve of the conservative. Even if they put only limited effort into charitable activities, the more optimistic could point to the expanding economic opportunities available to all once they had been helped over immediate crises.

\(^1\) For the English practice and precept of charity, the best treatments are those by Burn, op. cit., esp. pp.100-10, 124-9, and D. Owen, op. cit., chs. 4 and 6. I have tried to develop this analysis independently of Owen and Burn. The interesting and satisfying point is the similarity between the English and the colonial practice and outlook which emerges.
This appeal was the simple call to functional necessity and the desire to preserve life: life so important in a new society. So often charitable leaders, especially of the Benevolent Society, defended and justified their efforts by the simple appeal – could these people be left in the gutter to die? Christianity, humanity, utility, pride and even fear were all invoked. Their sufferings invited action, their potential to the work force underlined it, the concept of a new society where the worst of the old had been left behind demanded it, the necessity of protecting the existing fabric of society against the threats of social anarchy bred in poverty suggested it: as fellowmen, potential labourers, threats to the image of society, in all these guises the poor evoked action.

These very general social responses were backed by some powerful and explicit social norms. Their most respectable and direct expression was in Christian terms, as the Benevolent Society's annual report illustrated. Indeed that society had grown out of a meeting of the Bible Society Auxiliary in 1818.¹ Its leading organiser

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by 1850, George Allen, was a firm and practising Christian. The Christian duty to care for the needy and the broken-hearted was frequently underlined, sometimes in association with the concept of a blessing in return, at annual meetings, in correspondence to the Herald and in annual reports. If the ethos of the enlightenment had emerged as a significant determinant of behaviour in the colony, as Michael Roe has argued, then in the field of charity its normative impact reinforced the traditional Christian teachings. Brotherly love was a duty upon which all agreed, whether it was called mateship, philanthropy or caritas. The leaders of the Benevolent Society, for instance, combined utilitarian and idealist calls comprehensively in their annual report for 1848-9:

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1 George Allen attended his first meeting of the House Committee of the Benevolent Society on 22 November 1824. He wrote in his journal '...the people appear to be very comfortably provided for. Much credit is due to the Government and public that an Institution like this should be found in the Colony'. (G.W.D. Allen, Early Georgian, Sydney, 1958, p.92). By his assiduity in administration and generosity in giving he quickly came to dominate the affairs of the Society for more than forty years as Secretary and Vice President. He was also a member of the Board of the Sydney Infirmary and a member of the Legislative Council from 1856 till 1873. He died in 1877. See A.D.B., vol.1., s.v.

2 Quest for Authority, chs.7-9.

3 The use of these two terms is common coin among students of moral philosophy. I particularly have in mind the suggestive contrasts drawn by J.B. Schneewind, 'Moral Problems and Moral Philosophy in the Victorian Period', Victorian Studies, vol.9, Supplement, September 1965, pp.27-46.
Your Committee would, in conclusion, more strongly than ever urge upon the people of this colony, so noted for their liberality, the claims of this excellent institution for their support. If it were necessary it might be shown, as a matter of expediency, to be more advisable to support this Society by voluntary contributions than to be compelled by law to contribute sufficient for supporting it, and the machinery necessary for working a poor law commission. But your Committee would place the claims of the Society on much higher grounds than these. There are no duties more strongly advanced in Scripture than those of benevolence and charity - "The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich; he bringeth low and lifteth up"..."It is more blessed to give than to receive"....

The teaching was plain: avoid the poor law and receive a Divine blessing while loving your neighbour.

These well established and generally accepted social values gave shape and content to the pressures of status conformity which operated in the community - for not even the most conservative could argue that social opportunity did not exist in the colony. Thus, some who might give only limited private assent to christian teaching knew that public support for the expression of its ethos was important for social success. Others wished simply to be found doing what their vice-regal betters advocated. It was this desire which Macquarie plainly exploited when he gave vice-regal patronage to the Benevolent Society in 1818-9. The Female School of Industry seemed to possess a similar cachet for the female status seeker. Membership of the board of the Infirmary or the Benevolent Society conferred a broader but equally significant social status.
Sometimes it was not the benefit of status which drew people into the charitable societies, but the hope of social benefits. Already it has been suggested that many were glad to support societies which kept beggars off the streets and assured decent facilities for the birth even of illegitimate children. Others sought to propagate more positively their own moral assessments of the causes of destitution which confronted them. The Acting Committee of the Benevolent Society often fell into an authoritarian tone, handing out discipline nearly as frequently as rations, as it sought to condemn such moral failures as drunkenness, shiftlessness or desertion. Occasionally the social investment of charitable effort yielded direct benefits to the participants, as in the case of the committee of the Female School of Industry. The Orphan Schools' boards, and that of the newly formed Destitute Children's Asylum exercised a similar form of patronage in the placement of their 'apprentices'. For doctors, election as an honorary surgeon or physician to the Infirmary was the royal road to prosperity. Not only, therefore, was status to be gained by doing good works, especially in the company of the pillars of society, but also these very good works helped to confirm and sustain the existing social order, hierarchic, well structured and based on the values of the society of rural England.

The government was aware of the advantages which charity might yield. Goulburn wrote to Macquarie in 1820 concurring in the Governor's limited support of the Benevolent Society as a means by which the colonial community, and not the imperial government, would be
committed to caring for the poor. As imperial contributions to the colony's charitable institutions nonetheless rose, the increase was commented upon, both in Sydney and London. But the administrators were conscious of the benefits available to them as a result of these judicious subsidies. Unless these public charitable institutions did the work, the government itself would be saddled with the administrative overhead of a full-scale poor relief structure. There was little or no possibility of local help in the way the poor law was administered in England, especially when it is remembered that the supply of skilled administrators in the colony was often scarcer than funds.

In the 1820s, the justification for this financial support was based on the assistance given to ex-convicts, their progeny or their victims by the institutions. In the 1840s, with the cessation of transportation the imperial government directed that its subsidies to the colony's charitable institutions cease. The colonial administration sought to continue this support out of its own resources, basing the system of grants on those made under the Church Act of 1836. An arrangement was

2 These reached a maximum of £3,000 to the Benevolent Society in 1841, as is shown by its A.R.s.
3 Col. Sec. to Maitland Benevolent Society and Hospital, 26 November 1844, V. & P. 1844, vol.1, p.294; on the working of the Church Act, see Barratt, op. cit., p.32ff.
reached with the Infirmary in 1848, and with the Benevolent Society in 1850.\(^1\) None of the charitable institutions were accountable to the government for the use of these generous subsidies, nor did it exercise a voice in their deliberations. Of course, such men as Edward Deas Thomson, Colonial Secretary 1837-56, who was President of the Sydney Infirmary from 1849 to 1878, of the Benevolent Society for most of the same period, and also of the Society for Destitute Children, served as vital informal links.

The role assigned to the charitable societies by the government was to stimulate community concern for the poor and to organise the necessary care for them. The possibility of the government actually taking over poor relief in the manner of the English poor law was canvassed from time to time in the 1840s, in the light of the reductions in the support from the imperial treasury. The annual report of the Benevolent Society for 1848-9 suggested that even as a matter of mere expedience, voluntary contributions were to be preferred to those derived from the compulisions of law. Speakers at the annual meeting of the same society in 1851 warned of the dangers inherent in a fall in the volume of subscriptions.\(^2\) Sir Alfred Stephen, Chief Justice,

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\(^1\) In the case of the latter, virtually a promise to meet the annual deficit with a nominal requirement that £1,000 be raised by subscriptions annually. Col. Sec. to B.S., 20 May 1850, quoted in B.S. A.R. 1850, p.4.

\(^2\) Speeches quoted in A.R. 1850.
expressed his conviction at the annual meeting the following January that the distress should be relieved, and further, that it was 'much better that the relief should be afforded by a body which possessed the means of investigation and discrimination which private charity could never command...[but he feared that] a poor law was inevitable'. Immediately the Society's Secretary and Vice President, George Allen, rose to argue that 'there could be no greater curse inflicted on the country than the establishment of a poor law'. His view prevailed. The dominant feeling among the men who conducted the Society was that a poor law was to be resisted. It was a threat to the pockets of the well to do; it was a slur on the quality of their christian charity; it could imply that the indigent might claim aid as a right, rather than apply for the assistance they were found to be worthy of. To these eminent men the Benevolent Society was an honorable alternative because conducted on a voluntary basis and because each case of destitution could be investigated on its merits.

With them the government agreed. In a de facto sense these societies were fulfilling a social function closely resembling that of the Boards of Guardians in England, but one on a voluntary basis, and without formal government responsibility. The anomalous

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1 A.R. 1851. It is to be noted that there was no system of local government in the colony in 1850, let alone a Poor Law. This area has been surveyed by F. Larcombe, The Development of Local Government in N.S.W., Melbourne, 1961.
centralisation forced on the colony by the convict system was to be replaced by a more normal emphasis on autonomy and minimal government responsibility.

By the end of the century this confidence in the autonomous public society, with its board of directors, subscribers and government subsidies was weakening. Some tasks were to prove insoluble by this method. New tasks emerged for which the government administration was to take on direct responsibility. In some cases it was to be the scale of the operations involved, in cost and complexity, which was to draw the government back into direct participation in the field of social welfare. This interaction, this distribution and redistribution of responsibility, will be an important theme of the thesis, especially when it is associated with the development of a more constructive approach to the control and manipulation of the community and its environment to which we referred earlier.

Broadly speaking then, charity in New South Wales around 1850 was conducted in a community where self-improvement was the dominating ethos, where poverty was believed to be in most cases self-inflicted, and thus subject to moral condemnation, and where voluntary effort to ameliorate the resulting destitution was officially encouraged and approved. The government played an important part in financing these provisions, largely as a legacy of its responsibility for the convicts, working in conjunction with that willingness to turn to the government which the environment had forced on settlers and administrators alike. But the emphasis was on the
public societies as the normal institutional means of meeting the needs of the poor. The poor, most influential people believed, could be reduced in number and recruitment to their ranks checked by a combination of encouragements and penalties. Men and women taking pride in their christian benevolence could not easily stand aside and comfort themselves with the glib assertion that things could and must find their level without any effort on their part. But their hopes for improvement meant that they were unwilling to believe that pauperism was a permanent part of the social structure of the colony. The result was that charity was regarded as a minor adjustment to the machinery of society, rather than as a radical reformation of it. Charity must not invade the domain of the laws of supply and demand, nor the system of social rewards and penalties. It must neither threaten the basic institutions of the colony, nor buy their continuance by an amount of casual charity which would eviscerate that sturdy self reliance which was to be the foundation of its prosperity.¹ It was a social, rather than a legal duty. It was a preservative, rather than a reformatory activity. The goals set were minimal rather than maximal. It was not the aim of the charitable to transform the basic levels or systems of the community, but simply to preserve the neediest from immediate extinction.

¹ Burn, op. cit., pp.107-8.
CHAPTER 2

THE POOR, 1850-75

The situation of the poor around 1850 has now been considered in a general context of social activity and opinion. The needs of the poor, the provisions made for them and the reasons why some in the community accepted the responsibility of caring for them have been examined. There are three categories of discussion - need, provision, motive. Three groups have been considered - the poor, destitute children, and the sick poor. The provisions made by 1850 show that the needs of children and the sick had gained separate consideration. This process by which more precise community classification of need emerged is an important one. It was stimulated by changes in the environment, by improvements in knowledge and skill, and by shifts in attitudes. That such increasingly precise classification emerged is evidence of the community's changing perception of needs and of the willingness of its members to deal with them.

In the field of general poor relief the range of activities of the Benevolent Society contracted and took on more precise definition in the 25 years from 1850 to 1875. Meanwhile other institutions and organisations emerged, to provide more particular care for some, at least, of 'the poor'. There is evidence that social awareness of the needs and problems of the poor was quickened in this period, but the practical effects of this were not, by 1875, very great. Among the stimulants to this awareness were the criticisms of the 1855 Board
of Inquiry, the newspaper publicity given the Benevolent Society in 1858 and 1861 over conditions in the Sydney asylum, the leadership of one or two philanthropists, notably Dr Douglass, and the economic conditions of the 1860s. The period closed with the assessment of charitable endeavour made by the Windeyer Commission on public charities. But it was not a very perceptive assessment, because the focus of the Commission's two reports was on the Sydney Infirmary, and on boarding-out for children, rather than on general poor relief.

1. Criticism and reorganisation of the tasks of the Benevolent Society, 1850-62

In the early 1850s the Benevolent Society found that it could cope with the wide range of demands for aid being made of it. The government had granted the Society the use (though not ownership) of the vacant convict hospital buildings at Liverpool in 1851. Nearly all the men housed in the Pitt Street asylum were moved to this new location.¹ Along with the decision of the colonial government to subsidise the work of the Society, this extension of its facilities encouraged the General Committee in the belief that the Society was fulfilling its responsibilities towards the poor of the colony. At the 1852 annual meeting this confident hope was expressed by George Allen, who once more linked the activities of the Society with the colony's avoidance of

¹ B.S. A.R. 1851. The buildings still stand. They are now the Liverpool Technical College.
a poor law. After a sharp rise in the number of cases of outdoor relief early in 1851, the latter months of the year had seen a fall in this type of assistance. This was taken to mean that the much feared impact of the gold diggings had not been so severe after all. At Liverpool minor improvements were put in hand and reported faithfully by the local committee and the quarterly deputation. The Acting Committee continued to meet weekly to hear applications for aid. For example, Mary Carr, whose husband had absconded, was granted rations for herself and three children for a month, while Mary Collins, though armed with a fresh recommendation from Archdeacon McEncroe, was told to bring evidence to the Archdeacon that her husband really was ill before any rations would be issued.

An analysis of the cases receiving outdoor aid from the Benevolent Society at the end of 1855 listed

1 A.R. 1851, A.G.M. held 23 January 1852.
2 Ibid., p.12.
3 E.g., Report of quarterly deputation's visit in May, 11 July 1854, General Committee minutes 1854-8. The 'quarterly deputation' was a group of two or three members of the General Committee, appointed by it to visit the Liverpool asylum four times a year. The 'Local Committee' was made up of Liverpool notables, which supervised the daily affairs of the institution.
4 Acting Committee minutes, 10 February 1852, p.168.
5 Ibid., 5 June 1855, p.327.
44 widows with families
23 mothers with families, the husband deserted
or in gaol
14 mothers with families, the husband sick
10 old couples
10 old people, single.

These examples suggest that those thought worthy of aid in the 1850s usually excluded men able to work, and any found in blatantly immoral circumstances. Consistently the largest group in receipt of outdoor aid from the society (through the whole period of this study) were women with families, often large, where the husband was dead, 'gone away' (e.g. to the diggings), or in hospital.

The 1855 Inquiry

In 1855 the government appointed a board to inquire into the working of the Benevolent Society and the Destitute Children's Asylum. Increasing expenditure on outdoor relief, and on the care of women and children at the Benevolent Asylum, and rising admissions to the Destitute Children's Asylum prompted the inquiry. The outline directive to the two members of the Board made it plain that the government was not happy with the existing relationship between itself and the public charities, and that there were suspicions about the consistency and propriety of the activities of the two societies, especially with respect to the outdoor relief granted by the Benevolent Society.

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1 The establishment of this society is discussed below, ch.3, part 2.
It is a well known fact, [the Colonial Secretary wrote to the Board in the terms of reference] that Benevolent institutions...are very apt (through a natural wish on the part of those, who are called upon to administer them, to assist to the utmost those who appear to be in distress), to enhance those very evils which it was the object of the institution to abate or relieve....It is, therefore, very possible, that through a mistaken benevolence on the part of the administration...there may be such an erroneous system at work as will call for the interference of the Legislature in order to regulate, precisely, the claims of the different classes to relief [perhaps]...power ought to be given...to maintain proper discipline....It is very often the case that persons who have, for many years, been living on charity, get at last to consider their support as a matter of right.1

The instructions gave the Colonial Secretary an opportunity to outline the principles upon which he believed charity should be dispensed. The Board then had clear criteria by which they were to assess the practice of the two societies, one old and one very new. This certainly accounts both for the detail they reported and the strong tone of correction which they adopted towards the two societies. The records of their visits also reveal this divergence of opinion between the Board and the societies.

Their report was an exposition of this harder, less yielding approach to the poor, which showed that some community leaders were less pessimistic about the

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Col. Sec. to Inspector of Police (Mayne) and Agent for Church and School Lands (Merewether), 19 May 1855, V. & P. 1855, vol.1, p.981ff, wherein also is their Report.
inevitality of poverty, and more willing to make strong moral criticisms, both of those who sought charitable aid from the two societies, and also of the governing bodies who dispensed it so freely. They were particularly critical of the laxity with which admissions were granted to the two asylums, and the lack of investigation associated with outdoor relief. The practice of the Benevolent Society's Acting Committee, they argued, was broadly inconsistent with the Society's aims; neither mendicity nor vagrancy was being discountenanced, nor industrious habits and a proper spirit of independence being encouraged.

In reply, both that Society and the Sydney Morning Herald restated the position. The crucial point was that but for the Benevolent Society many would be wandering the streets, begging, starving, soon to die: a state of affairs not to be contemplated in Sydney. In reply, both that Society and the Sydney Morning Herald restated the position. The crucial point was that but for the Benevolent Society many would be wandering the streets, begging, starving, soon to die: a state of affairs not to be contemplated in Sydney. The community had, perforce, to accept the existence of destitution, whatever its cause, and act to alleviate the distress. Perhaps, the Herald went on, the Inspector General of Police was too prone to see all applicants at the asylum as rogues and vagabonds or habitual drunkards. It was

...upon the moral character of society, rather than its material circumstances, that the social reformer has to operate. Government has a duty more responsible than to throw the blame of the evils that exist amongst us upon our few charities. These

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1 B.S. A.R. 1855, pp.11-13.
do but step in to relieve where that [moral character] has failed to accomplish its chief end....

Except for the immediate impact of the visits of the Inquiry Board, and perhaps for the public airing of their exposition of doctrines on charity so critical of current practice, nothing came of the inquiry. As the Herald rightly remarked, the report was too general to enable any immediate action to be taken on the basis of its remarks. It was at the level of approach and assumptions that its remarks were cast, with the exception that the need of a separate lying-in institution was publicly proclaimed. But nothing was done about this. The practice of the Society in caring for the poor of the community continued as before. Indeed, in those areas where the Board was most critical of the Society's practice - in giving outdoor relief, and in providing facilities for confinements - its work increased. True, the House Committee of the Society urged the General Committee to require pregnant unmarried women to have their hair cut short on entry 'to distinguish them from persons of good character and to produce in some degree a sense of disgrace that is now too seldom manifested'. But the General Committee rejected the suggestion. The Annual Report for 1856 remarked on this 'much vexed subject': the Asylum was never intended for them, and yet they still came forward;

1 25 October 1855.
2 General Committee minutes, 14 October 1856.
the number of illegitimate children born there had risen from 39 in 1833 to 53 in 1856. This was surely a task for the government to undertake.¹ Speakers at the annual meeting urged direct action to coerce the government into providing special facilities for the care of these cases. Dr Douglass suggested marching the paupers through the town.²

The first years of responsible government, 1856-8

Politically, few important decisions could be made late in 1855 or early in 1856. The elections for the Legislative Assembly under the new Constitution were soon to take place, to be followed by the exit of the old Executive Council, and the appointment of a government responsible to the Assembly. Major decisions on expenditure and policy tended to be left for the attention of this incoming government.

It is interesting to find, therefore, that the Donaldson cabinet (in 1856) and the related Parker cabinet of 1857, were seeking to make some assessment of the responsibility of the government towards the charitable institutions of the colony.³ One member of Parker's cabinet argued that the charitable institutions

¹ A.R. 1856.
² These speeches are published as part of the A.R. for 1856.
³ The political outlook of these two politicians is discussed in Loveday & Martin, op. cit., p.10ff. and pp.24-9.
were entitled to state support, especially in the light of the concentration of most charitable institutions in and around Sydney. To require local rates to support all of these would have been asking too much. Sir William Manning, Donaldson's Attorney General, argued for a proportionate subsidy from the State, thus formalizing current practice.\textsuperscript{1} Clearly charity was a matter of concern to the early ministries under responsible government.

Of course the Benevolent Society had no intention of allowing the matter to be pigeon-holed. Through 1857 the Society sought government aid on a number of other fronts, all designed to ease the pressure it was experiencing from the increased demand for its facilities.\textsuperscript{2} Few of these appeals met with much success. As a way of gaining temporary respite Cowper's cabinet decided to inform the Society that the general principles upon which the government assisted such institutions as

\textsuperscript{1} Papers, unregistered, at C.S.I.L. 57/3128.

\textsuperscript{2} Railway Department to U. Sec., Department of Lands and Public Works, 5 February 1857, re claim of B.S. for £3,000 for land taken by late Sydney Railway Company; B.S. to Col. Sec., 20 July 1857, asking for £1,200 for repairs and extensions at Liverpool, and for the grant of the buildings, both in Department of Lands and Public Works letters received, 57/2653, box 3575; B.S. to Col. Sec., 31 July 1857, requesting £6,543 to be put on coming estimates, C.S.I.L. 57/3136, with 57/3128; B.S. to Col. Sec., 3 November 1857, protesting against the intention of the new Impounding bill, C.S.I.L. 57/4530.
the Benevolent Society were under review. But neither the needs of the community nor the overstrained accommodation of the Asylum could wait on such dilatory behaviour.

Controversy 1858

Attention was focused on the Asylum once more in April 1858. A new born child died there - probably as a result of the carelessness of the 86 year old woman to whom it was entrusted on arrival. The Society took the opportunity to protest against the easy community assumption that its Asylum could and would care for these children. The Herald was horrified at the thought of five such children being deposited monthly and scarcely any surviving. Letters were published in its columns and questions asked in the Legislative Assembly all critical of conditions in the Asylum. Cowper remarked that:

It was a lamentable fact that all the charitable institutions of the city were very much overcrowded, and the Benevolent Asylum, being the only refuge of such unfortunates [i.e. foundlings], had received more children than it was capable of

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1 Minutes for Executive Council, 23 September 1857, signed by all members of Cowper's cabinet, with Department of Lands and Public Works letters received 57/2653 in box 3575.
2 S.M.H. 26 April 1858, ed.
3 27 April 1858.
4 E.g., 1 May 1858.
properly managing; and at the present time it was almost in a bankrupt state.\textsuperscript{1}

The House Committee of the Society, meeting on 14 May, heard a strong statement from Dr McFarlane and Dr Bland (the Society's honorary physicians) repudiating the idea that the high mortality among these foundling children which was found so sensational by the press was the fault of the staff of the Asylum. Such children, they said, were often diseased and often had never been fed from the moment of their birth till their arrival at the Asylum.\textsuperscript{2} The Committee went on to note that these children were received on government order, and to hope that the government would recognise its responsibility towards them. Meanwhile, in order to provide more effectually for them, it ordered certain administrative changes to provide better care and accommodation. Nurses were to be recruited from among the female inmates by offering extra food and 'a trifling gratuity in money', a ward devoted to the care of foundlings was set aside, reports from the Resident Surgeon were to be made weekly on their health, the children were to be classified and housed according to their sex and age, and competent teachers (not being inmates of the House) were to be found to instruct them as they grew older.\textsuperscript{3}

\begin{enumerate}
\item S.M.H. 1 May 1858, report of debate.
\item The return requested during the discussion in the Assembly showed that from 1850 to 1858 1,725 children were admitted to the Asylum, including 374 less than 12 months old. Of these 108 died, 68 being under 12 months. S.M.H. 29 October 1858.
\item House Committee minutes, 14 May 1858.
\end{enumerate}
These decisions were reported to the General Committee on 12 July, together with the regret of the Acting Committee at 'such an organic change in the constitution of the Asylum' represented by the admission of foundlings. 'Nevertheless' - and once again the sense of responsibility, the tenderness of heart, the awareness that nothing else was available is revealed - 'the doors having been opened for them it was, the [House] Committee believed, the bounden duty of those having the management to see that they were properly cared for....'

The General Committee accepted this report and decided to send a deputation to the Colonial Secretary to protest against the necessity which was forced upon the Asylum of admitting lying-in and foundling cases - so contrary to the objects of the Society.¹ The deputation met the Colonial Secretary about a week later. He agreed with them that the Benevolent Asylum was not the proper place, either for lying-in cases or for infants. He suggested negotiations with the Sydney Infirmary about the former, and with the Destitute Children's Asylum about the latter.²

Governor General Denison himself inspected the Sydney House on 22 July. He found it generally 'clean and in good order'. But like everyone else he noted the overcrowding that stretched facilities to

¹ General Committee minutes, 12 July 1858.
² Report of Deputation, ibid., 10 August 1858.
breaking point, and 'the presence of so many children, untaught, at least to any useful extent, and subjected to many evil influences and examples'. He suggested, in his methodical way, that the government should inform itself of the situation by calling for statistics on the inmates at the Liverpool and Sydney Asylums showing age, health, cause of admission, length of stay, habits, etc. With surprising promptitude the cabinet took up Denison's suggestion and appointed as 'Inspector of Charitable Institutions', the Registrar General (Christopher Rolleston). The Benevolent Society welcomed this action, hoping that it would help in the task of examining the problems of caring for the poor which confronted them. Meanwhile they negotiated on other fronts. The Destitute Children's Asylum indicated that it was willing to receive 50 of the children at Pitt Street immediately on the usual conditions, and all if the government would pay full expenses and a grant to extend the building at Randwick. The Benevolent Society forwarded this offer to the government, and indicated that, if the government would

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1 Memo by Denison, 23 July 1858 with C.S.I.L. 58/3951.
2 C.S.M. 14366, and Executive Council minutes 58/30, 26 July 1858, both at ibid.
3 General Committee minutes, 10 August 1858.
4 These were that the children be from 3 to 10 years of age, be free of disease, and that the government contribute an agreed amount towards their maintenance.
5 D.C.A. to B.S., 21 August 1858, in C.S.I.L. 58/3951.
provide for all the children, then the Benevolent Society would accept responsibility for lying-in women.\(^1\) A week or so later the Infirmary Board indicated their unwillingness to provide facilities there for these women as the Benevolent Society had sought previously.\(^2\) Rolleston, in his capacity as Inspector of Charitable Institutions, urged the government to provide for the children at Randwick, where, he believed, they had a far better chance of survival, and indeed 'under proper training, of their repaying tenfold, by their labour and industry in later life, the cost of their early maintenance and education'. So he urged, and Cowper minute\(d\), that £6,000 be placed on the estimates to provide for the extension of the Destitute Children's Asylum at Randwick.\(^3\) It seems however, that it was not till 1862 that such a grant was made.\(^4\)

These changes which the Benevolent Society recommended underline the quality of conditions in their asylum during the 1850s. As admissions rose, even if the old men were sent to Liverpool and the lunatics to the Tarban Creek Asylum, the Pitt Street building was rapidly taking on some of the worst features of an English

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\(^1\) General Committee minutes, 28 August 1858.
\(^2\) Sydney Infirmary to B.S., 7 September 1858, C.S.I.L. 58/3951.
\(^3\) Registrar General to Col. Sec., 2 November 1858, with ibid.
\(^4\) E.S.L. Govan, op. cit., p.187ff., shows £800 paid as a special grant in 1860, £2,000 in 1861 and £8,000 in 1862.
general workhouse. Women and children were being crowded together in the 'wards' with little or no attempt at classification. But the public attention focused on the Asylum by the deaths of these foundling children was bringing changes. The Society was - despite its disclaimers - being forced to accept foundling children as a specific responsibility. The work of the Destitute Children's Asylum was also expanded under the same public pressure. A system of transferring children from Pitt Street to Randwick as they reached the age of three was worked out. For both societies it was the government which bore the brunt of the increased costs implied by these changes, through capital grants and maintenance payments. Thus the generalised care for the poor which the Benevolent Society had been providing was in one aspect taking on more precise definition. For the rest the Society still had the problem of providing shelter and outdoor relief for the destitute and the aged. It sought £8,079 in the 1859 estimates for these purposes, which Cowper managed to provide, though in two instalments.¹ The work continued.

Growth and crisis at the Benevolent Asylum 1859-62

Later in 1859 the Benevolent Society again began to consider the better care of their charges. A special

¹ £6,000 on the main estimates, voted 13 January 1859, and £3,000 on the supplementary estimates, 25 March 1859. B.S. General Committee minutes, 28 December 1858 and 11 January 1859, records the correspondence; see S.M.H. reports of proceedings for 14 January and 26 March for the supply debate.
meeting of the General Committee resolved to call for plans from their architects for extensions at Liverpool and Sydney and to seek guarantees of support from the government. In this way it was hoped to provide better classification and comfort for the inmates. But another special meeting on 27 January 1860 rescinded this resolution, and instead directed that close consideration be given to moving to a site at Randwick as had been suggested in 1854. The two decisions reflected disagreement over the fate of the existing buildings, and whether they could be satisfactorily improved. This same disagreement was evident at perhaps the most heated annual meeting in the Society's history on 30 January 1860.

Some were far from pleased with the present arrangements. Dr George Walker, a member of the General Committee and one of the Society's honorary medical officers, wrote a scathing letter to the Herald criticising the Sydney site as 'wet and odorous'. To him it was no wonder 'we never save a child'. He pointed out that 'the wretched creatures who swell the number of its inmates' were 'the scum, the riff-raff of society'. Yet - characteristically - they could not be refused food

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1 Minutes, 6 December 1859.
2 Minutes, 27 January 1860. The land in question is now bounded by Botany and Rainbow Streets, and contains a school and a public park. See map encl. to C.S.M. 18715.
3 S.M.H. 31 January 1860.
and shelter. On the question of site he could find nothing but scorn for those who were unwilling to move to Randwick. The General Committee agreed and again resolved, on 9 March, to seek the site and funds to build a new asylum on it.

During the winter of 1860 the Empire turned its critical eye on the institution, giving us a biased yet useful account of the conditions in the Pitt Street building. A reporter noted the main defects as being a lack of accommodation and classification, poor ventilation, poor drainage, a bad site and an unsatisfactory system of attendance. There were 35 men, 191 women and 77 children in the institution the day he had visited it. The women lived in the south wing: but the west end of the wing was used as a schoolroom for the 20 Roman Catholic children (who were all suffering from the itch). There were two wards in the wing, with 41 beds and 38 more sleeping on mattresses on the floor. In the children's ward where, he claimed, 25 had died in three weeks, he found slatternly, fearsome attendants. In the men's ward itch was prevalent. The laundry was 'a dilapidated shed'. The site was being affected by the drainage from the Devonshire Street Cemetery. In all it was horrid.

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1 S.M.H. 3 March 1860.
2 Minutes, 9 March 1860.
The next week there was an article comparing the working of the Destitute Children's Asylum and the Benevolent Asylum, much to the disadvantage of the older society.¹

The very satisfaction [the article concluded] derived from the view of the vigorous and successful management of the charitable institution for children, deepens the indignation we cannot but feel at the negligence and abuses which have intercepted many benefits designed for the aged and infirm.

A month later this was followed up by a leader headed 'the Sydney Juggernaut', which compared the Asylum unfavourably with the Black Hole of Calcutta. 'In no institution...has there existed such an effectual machinery for the destruction of human life as is offered by this so called Benevolent Society...[where] 83 died in June and July'.² The paper conveniently ignored the fact that a contagious disease had been working its fatal way through the two asylums. Nor was it willing to concede that the very conditions of the Society's work implied that it would be in its asylums that unfed, deserted new-born children and decayed old people would die. These asylums were the last resort for such people. But the number of deaths involved was a revelation to some people, who once again responded in angry humanitarian tones. It was easy to criticise the Asylum, especially when the building was now nearly forty years old.

¹ Empire 16 July 1860. The visit was on 10 July.
² Empire 15 August 1860.
The Society itself was quick to admit these defects in the building. In reply to the Colonial Secretary's request for an explanation of the Empire's charges, the Acting Committee and the senior honorary, Dr Bland, admitted the need for improved classification, ventilation and drainage. They were convinced that knives and forks could not be issued to the inmates for fear of misbehaviour. To them two nurses who were paid small gratuities were enough for the lying-in cases and the children, with one more for the men and other able bodied female inmates at Pitt Street. They defended the practice of always providing meat boiled as the best and most adequate. For such special action as was necessary they were convinced that the regular subscribers should not be called upon to pay. The moral was that unless the government made special grants available to improve the buildings, and arranged
alternative facilities for lying-in cases, a death rate of this size would inevitably continue.¹

¹ Acting Committee to Col. Sec., 18 September 1860; Dr Bland to Col. Sec., 22 September 1860, both published in S.M.H. 16 November 1860.

While 1860 was an unusual year in the high number of deaths among the inmates, the following table illustrates the size of the annual intake and its distribution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benevolent Society</th>
<th>Admissions and Discharges, 1860</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>In the Asylum at 31-12-59:</strong></td>
<td>Sydney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admitted during the year</td>
<td>37m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>left with permission</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>absconded</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transfer to Liverpool</td>
<td>346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to Sydney Infirmary</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to lunatic asylums</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to Orphan Schools</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ordered to leave</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>died</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In the Asylum at 31-12-60:</strong></td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: B.S. A.R. 1860.
In the Society's annual report for 1860, the opportunity was taken once more of defending it from criticisms and explaining the pressures under which it was operating. The year, the report stated, had been one of 'widespread commercial depression', together with 'universally prevalent sickness'. Added to these problems were the demands of destitute children and confinement cases, for neither of whom they had proper arrangements. Yet they were 'compelled, from consideration of humanity', to receive both of these groups. The rising demand for outdoor relief was reflected in the weekly number of cases. Bad economic conditions, so often associated with the winter and sickness were quickly reflected in the books of the Acting Committee. The Benevolent Society could only receive the requests and trust the government could continue to meet their deficits.

After another harrowing winter (1861), with increasing pressure for permanent places added to the other responsibilities of the Society and negotiations for a smooth system for transferring children to the Randwick Asylum still dragging, it was not surprising that interested members of the Legislative Assembly should take a hand. A Select Committee was appointed to 'inquire and report upon the adequacy of the provisions

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1 The Liverpool house was reported to be 150 over its capacity with 29 beds in the Dining Room. B.S. General Committee minutes, 8 October 1861.

2 B.S. to Col. Sec., 7 March 1861, C.S.I.L. 61/956 encl. to 61/1827.
made for the destitute' by the Benevolent Society.\(^1\) They gained a picture very similar to that of the Empire reporter. The Society heartily agreed, being busy in negotiations with the government for alternative sites, at Randwick, Parramatta and Liverpool.\(^2\) George Allen's evidence to the Committee underlined the concept of the Society as a fairly passive, but essential, functional institution in the community. Lying-in cases were received by the Society because no one else would take them. Outdoor relief was 'merely to prevent people from starving'. Previous governments had always found the funds to meet their deficits.\(^3\) The Committee diligently visited both Asylums and reported critically on them. One ward at Pitt Street held 99, when intended for 38; Liverpool's population (at about 380) was twice normal capacity. Drainage, ventilation, space, crowding and cooking were all criticised once more, thus emphasising again the unhappy conditions under which these people

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\(^2\) B.S. to Col. Sec., 31 August 1861, the Crowded State of Sydney and Liverpool Asylums; ibid., 15 October 1861, for use of commissariat buildings at Parramatta; ibid., 22 November 1861, for premises adjoining Liverpool Asylum; Brigade Major to Col. Sec., 16 December 1861, Barracks at Parramatta can be handed over at once. All these letters have been lost, having been forwarded under blank cover to the Department of Public Works, 21 October 1862. But the C.S.I.L. Register provides this terse record. It is confirmed by the B.S. minute books.

\(^3\) Select Committee on the Benevolent Society, evidence of George Allen, qq.1-63, 17 October 1861.
dragged out their existence. The Committee supported the judgement of the Society in seeking a new site at Randwick, where classification and proper care could be given to upwards of 1,200 people. They urged the Society to finance this improvement by drawing on its accumulated reserves of £10,000, by selling the Pitt Street site at a probable price of £20,000, and by seeking a government grant to match this £30,000 from their own resources. The Committee made few comments on the morality of providing for lying-in cases. They virtually assumed, unlike the Society, that these cases would remain its responsibility. The Committee clearly did not call into question the existing assumption made by the community that the Benevolent Society operated as its residual charitable institution.¹

Certainly the Society believed this was the case, as they received permission from the Colonial Secretary to occupy the old commissariat buildings at George Street, Parramatta.² Although the Society still hoped to receive land at Randwick,³ this building at Parramatta was regarded as an essential stop gap to which some of the men from Liverpool could be sent. When the number of women at Pitt Street also became intolerable a similar rush decision was made to move some of them to

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¹ Ibid., Report, tabled 6 January 1862.
² Col. Sec. to B.S., 4 January 1862, General Committee minutes 1858-71, p.110.
³ A.R. for 1861.
the vacant Hyde Park barracks. ¹ This of course being a public building, the co-operation of the government was implicit. Three days later the secretary wrote to the Colonial Secretary seeking £3,083, as the first quarter's government payment against the vote for 1862.² But Cowper's reply, through his Under Secretary, was a comprehensive redistribution of responsibilities that completely reversed the plans for expansion which the Society had been making over the previous four or five months. The letter gathered up all the accumulating problems of poor relief as administered by the Society in a series of far reaching decisions. The Society was informed that the government would take over the care of the aged and destitute, housing them in the buildings at Parramatta and Hyde Park so recently made available, and also in the Liverpool building, which the Society had used for this purpose since 1850. But the care of women and children and lying-in cases, as well as the provision of outdoor relief, was to remain in the hands of the Society. These were branches of the subject in which it is considered the government ought not, under any circumstances, to interfere. There will however be no objection to propose to Parliament that the amount contributed by private subscription for relieving outdoor

¹ Action of sub-committee approved by General Committee, 18 February 1862.
objects of charity should, if necessary, be supplemented in the same manner as grants in aid made in other cases.¹

A Government Board was appointed to control these institutions.² The Herald applauded the decision, for it was 'glad at last humanity's cries had been heard'. The suffering of crowded, ill-cared for poverty was to pass, it was hoped.³ The Benevolent Society was not so pleased, indeed it was distressed, especially since Cowper was currently a Director.⁴ In the process of achieving a more specific classification of the tasks of poor relief it seemed they were to be left with the controversial and costly tasks, without any answer to their request for government subsidy.⁵ They immediately asked for an unconditional guarantee from the government to cover their funds until the appropriate legislative sanctions were given.⁶ Cowper refused such a guarantee, promising only to consider requests for special grants

¹ Under Secretary, Colonial Secretary's Office, to B.S., 25 February 1862, ibid., pp.317-8.
² Col. Sec. to Registrar General, Clerk of Executive Council, Clerk of Legislative Council, Collector of Customs, and Health Officer, 3 March 1862, ibid., p.319.
³ 3 March 1862.
⁴ A.R. 1862.
⁵ S.M.H. 7 March 1862.
⁶ B.S. to Col. Sec., 10 March 1862, in terms of General Committee resolution of 6 March 1862, G.C. minutes 1858-71, p.137.
to cover excessive outdoor relief costs.\(^1\) At this, the General Committee resolved to cease all outdoor relief a fortnight from the date of the resolution.\(^2\) Perhaps this was an effort to foist outdoor relief onto the government. It seems best understood as a tactical move, although the more critical members of its committee were arguing that the Society was not required, in terms of the objects, to continue this work. It was an aspect of charitable effort that frequently drew critical comment on the basis of the pauperising effect outdoor relief had on the recipients. It is clear that Canon Walsh and Archdeacon McEncroe disliked this resolution just as they had always preferred the Sydney site to any shift to Randwick. Their care was with the thousands of people living near poverty in the city and nearby areas. They proposed an amendment postponing final action till 30 June, but this was lost nine to three.\(^3\) Cowper's reply showed his irritation: to him the Society was insisting upon an unlimited and unconditional guarantee, which he would not grant. He was convinced that the original objects of the Society implied the distribution of outdoor relief. As a compromise, however, the government was willing to pay the full costs of maintaining women and children in the Asylum.\(^4\)

\(^1\) Col. Sec. to B.S., 13 March 1862, ibid.
\(^2\) Ibid., 26 March 1862.
\(^3\) Ibid., p.142.
\(^4\) Col. Sec. to B.S., 31 March 1862, ibid., pp.147-8.
this promise of financial aid the Committee voted to continue outdoor relief.  

During April and May the Society extracted further concessions from the government, as the various groups under consideration came into clearer focus. Destitute mothers admitted to the asylum, as well as lying-in cases, were to be paid for by the government. Then the children under two years were added. There, in effect the matter rested. In Cowper's letter of February a new role for the Society had been defined, and the relationship of the government to charitable action laid down for the next 30 years. The government had taken direct responsibility for the aged destitute, for whom simple institutional care could be provided, and about whose claims for aid there was usually little argument. The more controversial task of providing for destitute women with children was officially left to the Society, though largely financed by the government. The harassing task of outdoor relief was left explicitly as a matter for the Society to administer. The government would make pound for pound donations, as it had been doing in past years, but no more. Unconditional responsibility implied

1 General Committee minutes, 8 April 1862, the day before the threatened cessation of outdoor relief, on the motion of Canon Walsh and Archdeacon McEncroe.
2 Under Secretary, Colonial Secretary's Office to B.S., 5 May 1862, 'Destitute Asylums Correspondence', p.325.
3 Ibid., 7 June 1862, p.331.
an unknown expense, and an extension of government responsibility into a field which Cowper believed should be reserved for private endeavour. Moreover, he wished to avoid associating the government with the charges so frequently made that outdoor relief encouraged mendicity and vagrancy. The Benevolent Society in its turn expressed their pleasure (somewhat barbed) 'that the poor [i.e. the aged] had obtained guardians, who had unlimited means of carrying out whatever they might deem necessary for their more effectual relief'.

2. Other efforts at poor relief, 1860-75

The Home Visiting and Relief Society

While this long drawn out process of defining the relationship between the Benevolent Society and the government was going on, other efforts were in hand for the relief of the poor in Sydney during a decade of recurrent economic depression. The Home Visiting and Relief Society began in 1861 on very different lines to

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A.R., 1862.
the Benevolent Society.\textsuperscript{1} Dr Douglass\textsuperscript{2} was the leading figure. Other foundation supporters such as the Wise brothers, Dr Fullerton, J.H. Goodlet, Sir Alfred and M.H. Stephen were also deeply committed to christian and humanitarian labours in the Sydney community. Its objects were to be fulfilled by:

\ldots visiting at their own homes such of the distressed inhabitants of Sydney as belonging to the Educated Classes and having seen better days, have been reduced by poverty, and affording them such relief as their circumstances need, and aiding them in their efforts to gain their own subsistence.\textsuperscript{3}

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\textsuperscript{1} S.M.H. 17 December 1861, report of a meeting at the Supreme Court. The inaugural public meeting was held on 14 July 1862, with Sir Alfred Stephen and Justice Wise as the main speakers. The first annual report, presented to the A.G.M., 17 June 1863, showed Stephen as president, G.F. Wise & H.G. Douglass secretaries, and E. Allan, Canon Allwood, Dr Bland, Peter Faucett, Dr Fullerton, Capt. J.H. Goodlet, J.V. Gorman, H. Lumsdaine, Chas Kemp, M.F. Murnin, Sir Wm Manning, Archdeacon McEncroe, Justice Milford, Dr Neild, S. North, J. Richardson, C.R. Rolleston, M.H. Stephen, H.J.T. Shadforth, Justice Wise on the committee, with Mr Ingelow as treasurer. S.M.H. 18 June 1863.

\textsuperscript{2} Henry Grattan Douglass (1790-1865), physician and public servant, had a controversial official career in N.S.W. in the 1820s. He returned to the colony in 1848. He took the lead in the foundation of the Destitute Children's Society as well as of the Home Visiting and Relief Society. He was an honorary physician at the Infirmary and later one of its directors. He was also a member of the Legislative Council after 1856, the General Committee of the Benevolent Society and the Senate of the University of Sydney. A.D.B. vol.1, s.v.

\textsuperscript{3} A.R. 1862-3.
The aims and methods of this new society suggest an awareness of the impact on people made by the Benevolent Society's requirement that applicants for outdoor aid should present themselves before the Acting Committee in person, and come the next day to the store for their weekly rations. It was believed that many genuinely deserving poor were unwilling to do this because they found it degrading and inquisitorial. There is an air of conscious gentility about this society. Dr J.D. Lang spoke of the misfortunes of life coming upon 'a gentlewoman by birth and training'. Sir Alfred Stephen argued that the Benevolent Society 'was a place surely unfit for such persons'. Not rations, but money, was distributed. Where possible, it was as a loan, for there was confidence that it would not be misused on drink, and that it would eventually be repaid. The emphasis on the distribution of aid in the homes of those who needed it was a theme recurring in the thinking of the more advanced workers in the field of charitable relief in these years. The main point was:

There was always something degrading when people were brought together in crowds to get their dole of charity at the workhouse; and all those who

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1 At the first annual meeting, S.M.H. 15 July 1862.
2 Annual meeting, 17 June 1863, A.R. 1862-3.
3 In its first year the society aided 55 people in this way; income was £399; in 1864-5 £99 of this was repaid, and £425 donated, while £59 was given to 23 people and £439 lent to 67 people. In each year the A.R.s speak with pride of these repayments.
desire to reform the national feeling had said that the public charity should be administered at the homes of those who required it, and not before all the world....

Perhaps we can find here the first faint outlines of a new approach to the methods of aiding the poor, with an emphasis on 'case-work', self-help and specially designed aid. Yet its work was never widespread. Its appeal was limited, for the number of the 'Educated Classes' who had come on hard times was never very great.

**Poverty and evangelism**

In 1862 Sunday morning breakfasts for the destitute were begun by a vigorous group of Christians whose aim was to reform as well as feed. These breakfasts were distributed at the Temperance Hall. The meals were followed by addresses on Christian topics, and were drawing 120-30 each week.

The poor people were urged to abandon the use of intoxicating drink, and all other vice, to clean themselves, seek employment, and work instead of beg, look up to God for his blessing, and try to gain a respectable position in society.

Among the supporters of this venture were such protestants as the Reverend Mr Nolan, the Reverend Mr

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1 Reverend Dr Steel, annual meeting 22 July 1864, S.M.H. 23rd. Cf. frontispiece.
2 S.M.H. 25 June 1862.
3 A.R. 1862, S.M.H. 4 April 1863.
Hartley, Mr Caldwell M.L.A., Mr Lucas and Mr Robinson.\(^1\)

It was a less socially prestigious group than the supporters of the Home Visiting Relief Society. Its concern for evangelism as well as poor relief ensured that. But it was a work which continued over the next 20 years.

A more comprehensive effort at reformation was also inaugurated in June 1862. This was the [Sydney] City Mission, whose aim was to be an unsectarian evangelistic agency among the poor of Sydney. Benjamin Short had brought from London a vision of what might be attempted in this line. He was supported by such clergymen as Thos Smith, J. Eggleston, Dr J.D. Lang, S.C. Kent, W. Allworth, and Dr J. Fullerton. Among the other members of the first committee were A. McArthur M.L.C., Thos Holt M.L.A., Justice Wise, John Fairfax, Edward Joy, J. Richardson, R.J. Horneman, and J.B. Goodlet. It is clear that these men were concerned for the social welfare of the community and were determined to support efforts to reform it.\(^2\)

\(^1\) Ibid., and A.R. 1863, 28 March 1864. Cf. also an account of its working in one of a series of articles on Sydney's charitable institutions, S.M.H. 25 June 1866.

\(^2\) Sydney City Mission: Ten Decades. The History of the Sydney City Mission, Sydney, 1962. Though of the glossy commemorative genre, this work has plainly been written with access to the Mission's minute books.
Sydney vagrants

This same reformism was apparent in the support given to yet another effort by Dr Douglass to provide for the poor. He wrote to the Herald drawing attention to the tale of 'homeless vagrants':

There is not a more lamentable sight in the city of Sydney than to witness the number of squalid, miserable creatures that are marched daily...[to] the police courts. A portion of them are liable to punishment under the Vagrant Act, as houseless and homeless poor, who are sentenced for no crime but their poverty....1

The appeal received the Herald's support, the editorial being timed to publicise a public meeting to discuss 'relief of the Houseless Poor'.2 Among those at the meeting were Dr Douglass (in the chair), J.H. Plunkett, George Allen, the Mayor, J. Caldwell, W. Love M.L.A., S. Emmanuel M.L.A., Dr Lang, Henry Parkes, M. Metcalfe, Edward Joy, J. Richardson, and J.H. Goodlet. In discussion on the motion that a night refuge for the houseless be established, Love and Caldwell wanted to know if scriptures would be read and whether temperance would be preached. Despite the deprecatory remarks of Plunkett, Douglass and Allen, who all hoped for a general, non-religious institution, Love pressed his point, ensuring that a number of protestants and temperance men were added to the committee. Nothing more

1 H.G.D. to S.M.H. 8 March 1864.
2 Editorial, 11 April 1864; report of meeting 12 April.
came of the effort, possibly because of this division of opinion.

Twelve months later the Herald described the work of the Sydney Night Refuge, where men were being given nightly accommodation. It was in premises rented from the Juvenile Temperance Hall, Francis Street, Woolloomooloo. Two articles republished by the Herald from the Sydney Mail stated that this work had grown out of the Sunday morning breakfasts. Certainly George Lucas was associated with both. The articles suggest that this Night Refuge had been begun in the winter of 1864, after the failure of Dr Douglass' efforts. There is no doubting the protestant flavour of the place. With food and shelter came spiritual fare also for the 13-20 inmates who were taught from the scriptures and helped in finding jobs. The refuge pressed on hopefully, and was still operating in much reduced circumstances, in 1898, when the Royal Commission on Public Charities surveyed its seedy, broken down premises scathingly.

The winters of 1865 and 1866 were difficult. A business recession was reflected in a sharp increase in the numbers applying for outdoor relief at the Benevolent Society, and more significantly, in the number of women whose reason for requesting relief was that their husbands

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1 S.M.H. 20 June 1865.
2 20 and 27 August 1866.
were out of work. There were always the difficult cases: Ellen Hourrigan attended the House Committee by order of the visitor, having charged that officer with wronging her in favouring other widows by giving them money. Failing to substantiate the claim, she still insisted that she had as much a right to that money as any other widow. For her complaint, her relief was discontinued for two weeks. Unemployed men without families were less acceptable at the Benevolent Society. But during these difficult months some at least received assistance there. Others no doubt swelled the numbers at the new soup kitchen and the two night refuges. Some made their home in the domain. In response to public pressure the government not only made subsidies available to the soup kitchen and the new night refuge, but also provided free rail travel to country districts for those seeking work, and speeded up expenditure on public construction.

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1 E.g., House Committee, 9 January 1866: of the 23 applicants dealt with at this weekly meeting, 11 gave this reason; 8 were single or widowed women, 4 had husbands incapacitated in some way.
2 Ibid., 14 August 1866.
3 B.S. H.C., minutes 15 January 1867.
4 Below, p.93.
5 E.g., a public meeting was held in Hyde Park on 15 October 1866, attended by 2-3,000 people, with David Buchanan in the chair. It was decided to petition the government for additional public works. S.M.H. 16 October 1866.
6 P.N. Lamb, op. cit., pp.60-1.
While these practical measures were emerging, a more hostile legal response was proposed by James Martin.\(^1\) He was not at all pleased at the numbers of vagrants who alternately lounged in the domain, gained some help from the societies or were convicted for short sentences under the vagrancy laws. He introduced a Workhouse bill in August 1866 providing for the establishment of institutions by the government to which persons found without lawful means of support including prostitutes, habitual drunkards, and irreclaimable disorderly persons could be committed by benches for indefinite periods. Martin wished 'to get them off the streets', to 'remove their evil influence' from the community, and to compel them to work. It was the custodial, regulatory concept again. By removing these loafers and vagrants from the sight of good people might it also be that they could be removed from their minds? The measure would also have given a large degree of disciplinary control over the inmates of the Government Asylums for the Infirm and Destitute. The Board of that organisation had often lamented their lack of powers over old men who behaved irregularly in the asylums, absconded at will and returned when in need. The associated Drunkards Punishment bill was designed by Martin to discipline another group of people, drunks who were indecent in public.\(^2\) Both acts were aimed at the undeserving, irresponsible poor.

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\(^1\) He became premier in January 1866, in succession to Cowper.

\(^2\) S.M.H. 23 August 1866, report of debate.
During the debate on the Workhouse bill Cowper criticised the powers conferred by the bill on the courts, by which they would be able to impose what he called 'perpetual imprisonment'. He asked what difference there would be between a prison and a workhouse. His vision was a freer, more trusting one than Martin's. Despite his protests the bills were quickly passed, with little opposition. This in part can be attributed to Martin's hostile evocation of the type of people being dealt with. It is possible, too, that the factions supporting him were unwilling to challenge him on the matter. In the upshot the workhouses were never established. When Cowper succeeded Martin as premier in October 1868, he had the act repealed.

Another effort at providing for the needs of these vagrant, houseless poor was initiated in the winter of 1867. A soup kitchen began operations in July, distributing 60-70 meals daily, and providing a free registry office for the many who could not find work. The hope, as always, in feeding these men, was to prevent them begging in the streets.

This is not to argue that all aid to the poor was distributed through the societies. The traditions of hospitality among the squatters, of the sundowners, of

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1. S.M.H. 16 August 1866, ibid.
2. Workhouse Act, 30 Vic. no.6; Workhouse Repeal Act, 32 Vic. no.10.
3. S.M.H. 7 September 1867.
'humping the bluey', all suggest otherwise. So do the many homilies delivered at the annual meetings of the various societies, as well as the upright, self-righteous editorials on 'pauperism' in the Sydney Morning Herald. Nor must the vigorous, sacrificial activities of such clergymen as Archdeacon McEncroe and Canon Stephen in the organised charitable institutions blind us to the works of charity done informally and discreetly by individuals and groups, especially churches, in Sydney. But the editorials and the homilies constantly warned against the pauperising tendencies of 'indiscriminate charity'. While not denying the Christian duty of all men to help their brethren, the prevailing trend of doctrine in the 1860s and 1870s was hostile to the gift of money or food at the backdoor, and critical of the operations of the professional beggar. Let them be given an introduction to the Acting Committee of the Benevolent Society, or be investigated at home by one of the other societies, rather than be confirmed by these degrading practices of occasional gifts extracted more by importunity than established need in the evil ways of pauperism so contrary to the vision of an improving community.

The Benevolent Society was not having an easy time of it either. Over 500 cases a month had been assisted during the winter of 1867.¹ The House Committee resolved in December to seek government assistance in forwarding

¹ S.M.H. 11 October 1867.
men with families into the interior by rail in their search for work.\footnote{1}{House Committee minutes 3 December 1867.} This assumption that the labour market was easier outside Sydney received little confirmation then or in the 1880s, when the same technique was attempted.

In May 1868 an effort was made to establish another night refuge, this time by the city magistrates, and on non-sectarian lines. A manifesto convening a public meeting was published in the \textit{Herald}.\footnote{2}{Quoted in \textit{Fifty Years of the City Night Refuge and Soup Kitchen}, p.4.} The first meeting was held on 28 May at the Central Police Office, with the Mayor in the chair.\footnote{3}{Ibid., pp.5-6.} An amalgamation with the Soup Kitchen in Dixon Street was arranged and Captain C.F. Scott, Police Magistrate, was elected the first President. Premises at 535 Kent Street were rented, and opened later in June. The 'City Night Refuge and Soup Kitchen' provided about 65,000 meals and 12,000 nights' shelter in its first twelve months of operation.\footnote{4}{A.R., 1867. This works out at roughly 30 beds a night, and 200 meals a day, divided between dinner and tea.} The report for 1870 emphasised that the place should not be as comfortable as to encourage men to stay there. Some attempt was made to provide work that the men could do in return for lunch or supper. They were required to bathe on Saturdays if they were in the institution on
that day. About 200 meals a day were distributed in 1870. Drunks were excluded this same report claimed. Women and children, though not originally intended to be a responsibility of the Refuge, did not hesitate to apply for aid, which was given as best the committee could.

During the whole of the 1860s economic conditions produced a fairly large group of unemployed people in Sydney. A series of responses emerged to the problems posed by their poverty, concentrating on different types of need as these were perceived, or offering varying services as thought appropriate. It was not till the early 1870s that the demand for labour rose to the point where the pressure on the societies from these people was eased.

3. The infirm and destitute, 1862-75

The aged infirm unable to live without asylum support had, since 1862, been the responsibility of the government. A Board was set up to conduct the affairs of the Government Asylums for the Infirm and Destitute. The men were housed in asylums at Liverpool and Parramatta, the women in the Hyde Park barracks.

1 Above, p.80.
2 Made up of the Registrar General (Christopher Rolleston), the Clerks of the Executive Council and the Legislative Council, the Collector of Customs and the Health Officer. C.S.M. 15395, 25 February 1862.
The work of these asylums expanded rapidly. 624 people were being cared for at the end of 1863 and 1,279 in 1877. Immediate steps were taken in 1862-3 to make the buildings occupied so hastily in January 1862 more habitable, with the provision of whitewash, privies, windows and gas.¹

Life for the old people was not easy: either in intention or practice. Certainly the rules drawn up in 1862 laid down that snuff and tobacco could be allowed to the inmates. But on the other hand, no presents were to be made to any inmate, except through the master or matron, nor could drink of any kind be introduced. They were to rise at six in the spring and summer, and at seven in autumn and winter, and, washed in half an hour, they were to take 45 minutes airing before breakfast. The housework of the asylums was all to be done by the inmates, often in return for small gratuities. This left a short period of recreation after each meal, and time for a weekly bath, with the night's rest to begin at seven-thirty in the spring and summer, and an hour earlier in the cold months. The inmates were to be permitted to attend Divine Service - at Hyde Park they could go to St James or St Mary's with little trouble, - each week. But they were to return immediately after

¹ The request for the installation of gas lighting at Hyde Park was supported by the fact that 'the old women cannot be prevented from lighting their pipes after the hour of midnight'. Government Asylums' Board to Col. Sec., 24 January 1866, Colonial Architect building files 1847-66, 2/640, State Archives.
the service and forbidden to bring contraband with them. It was austere, regulated, institutional life within which the inmates would perhaps make friendly informal contacts with one another, or more likely, gradually collapse into withdrawn, unseeing apathy the preface to physical decline.

Evidence survives from the 1860s of the care for the aged and destitute in country districts. Four aged and infirm men were sent down without notice from the Maitland Hospital to Liverpool Asylum in 1862. While the Board of the Government Asylums admitted them, they protested that country hospitals, themselves in receipt of government support, should not attempt to evade their responsibility to maintain the poor of their district.

Cowper minuted:

No rule can be laid down under [absolute?] circumstances: but as a general principle country

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1 The rules were published by the Government Printer, Regulations for the Internal Management of the Government Asylums for the Infirm and Destitute, Sydney, 1862. Copy encl. to C.S.I.L. 66/977. This is the typical pattern described by Peter Townsend, The Last Refuge, London, 1962, in which he studies institutional care for the aged in Britain in the 1950s. Much of his description can undoubtedly be applied to life in the N.S.W. Asylums. Compare also the description of institutional life for old people in Melbourne, in B. Hutchinson, Old People in a Modern Australian Community: A Social Survey, Melbourne, 1954, esp. ch.9.

institutions should maintain their own poor and it would I think be wise if a circular were sent to the Districts where hospitals are to warn them that they should not do as they, apparently, [are doing?]

....Inquiry might be made before the circular is written as to the course laid down hitherto by the Benevolent Society.¹

The Secretary of the Maitland hospital persisted, and sought the aid of the Colonial Secretary, in gaining admission in Sydney for their local aged and destitute. Beside cost and space, the vital issue was:-

...at this moment we have in the hospital seven or eight persons who are fit objects for the Government Institution, and it is obvious that we cannot keep them here without changing the character of the Hospital and making it into a poor house....²

The Board pointed out that any reversal of their decision not to receive country persons without previous application would only be possible when the Colonial Secretary made further accommodation available at Liverpool, not as a result of behind-the-scenes representations. With that Asylum full they were now again unable to house country paupers. Obviously the Colonial Secretary was unwilling to antagonise country benevolence, for he instructed his department to provide on the next estimates for further accommodation in the Government Asylums.³

¹ On ibid.
² Sec., Maitland Hospital to Col. Sec., 7 June 1864, C.S.I.L. 64/3316, encl. to 64/3880.
³ Board, Government Asylums to P.U.S., 12 June 1864, C.S.I.L. 64/3880, and Forster's minute on it.
But the pressure continued: once again the Maitland authorities took the extreme step of sending destitute men unheralded to Liverpool. Like unwanted foundlings they were left at the gate. A further source of country pressure came from the benches of Magistrates. To control their tendency to consign local destitute persons to Darlinghurst as vagrants, confident they would be sent on to Parramatta or Liverpool, the Colonial Secretary issued the following instruction:

Clerks of Petty Sessions...often, with perhaps humane intentions, strain the law so as to commit to gaols as vagrants, and in fact criminals, persons suffering from extreme old age, disease, or general debility. This appears to the Colonial Secretary to be highly objectionable both on social and moral grounds; and...also seriously to interfere with prison discipline and accommodation, [and is to be] discontinued....

If, he went on, the local Benevolent Society could not care for these persons, they should be sent to the Sydney Infirmary (if ill), or to the government asylums (if suffering from the effects of old age).^2

The Board of the Asylums resisted the implication that the Benches and Police Magistrates therefore had the power to order admission of paupers without the permission of the Board or its secretary.^3 On 20 March

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1 Board, Government Asylums to P.U.S., 28 November 1864, in 4/809.1.
2 29 November 1864, C.S.I.L. 64/5744 (Forster), ibid.
3 Board, Government Asylums to P.U.S., 10 March 1865, C.S.I.L. 65/1040, encl. to 78/4086, ibid.
1865 another circular, this time by Cowper, was sent to the Benches and Police Magistrates, pointing out that they were not to infer that they had the power to order admission to the Asylums. This right remained with the Board of Management. As the Board put it, 'Government, having gone so far in taking these Asylums under their immediate control, cannot shrink from incurring [expenses]'  

The picture that emerges is of the unwillingness of the small country hospitals that were growing out of the earlier dispensary and benevolent societies to receive as permanent pensioners the aged and decrepit of their districts. As long as possible the Colonial Secretaries avoided the necessity of spending more money. But they were unwilling to antagonise the country worthies. As always, it was the paupers who suffered while the administration took time to make up its mind. More and more were crammed into the three asylums through 1864-6. As if to underline the story of ad hoc solutions, 46 old people were sent to occupy the old convict barracks at Port Macquarie in the winter of 1866. That bleak and isolated place sheltered as many as 190 before it was evacuated in 1869.

In the early 1870s our knowledge of life in the asylums is somewhat clearer. The Empire began to probe living conditions in them. The Royal Commission on Public Charities actually took the trouble to visit them, and take evidence from some of the inmates as well as from the officials.

Policy was to admit people (of whatever age) who were unable through chronic illness to earn a livelihood; so were those unable to work from the effects of age, and also some who were still recovering from an illness or operation.1 At the asylum in George Street, Parramatta, 20 beds had been set aside as a hospital ward. There was also an infirm ward for paralysis cases. The asylum housed about 260 men.2 Liverpool held most of the chronically ill inmates, especially tuberculous and cancer cases - about 200 of the 629 men at Liverpool fell into these two categories. Another 200 there lived in a temporary wooden structure which sometimes failed to keep the rain out.3 It appeared that only on festive occasions did any of the inmates eat meat other than boiled.4 The Royal Commission reported adversely on the Hyde Park Barracks. They were crowded and insanitary.5

3 Ibid., p.113.
4 Ibid., Evidence 'Benevolent Asylums', q.54, 21 June 1873 (Wardsman Jamieson); Empire 27 May 1871, reporting Queen's Birthday festivities.
The Commission was more critical of the Parramatta Asylum. Its master (Dennis) was inefficient and open to charges of misconduct and neglect.\(^1\) The sort of thing they had in mind is illustrated by the evidence of Edward Rawlings, an inmate who acted as a wardsman:

Lady Dennis receives one quart of beef tea daily, equal to 2 lb. of our meat, daily for seven years, and she never inspects our messes or linen; and allowed the pudding on Her Majesty's Birthday to be made in a bath previously used by the inmates.\(^2\)

The bathman claimed three towels had to serve for 130 men.\(^3\)

Not only were the asylums overcrowded, but their staff were of questionable competence. The life of the inmates was a dull routine. There was a very obvious tendency for chronically ill patients to accumulate in them, despite the lack of staff and facilities. But public reaction was quiet. The community was willing to allow these unfortunate people to exist in such miserable conditions: they were taken care of.

4. The Benevolent Society, 1862-77: mothers, children and outdoor poor

The Society was to house destitute women and children and to provide facilities for lying-in cases: the

\(^1\) Ibid., p.113.
\(^2\) Evidence, 'Benevolent Asylums', qq.188-92, 21 June 1873, note on revision.
\(^3\) Ibid., q.233 ('bathman').
The Benevolent Asylum, Pitt Street, Sydney, ca 1890.
government was to pay for their upkeep. This was the agreement reached in 1862. Numbers dealt with rose steadily, if not as sharply as the intake of the government asylums. Children such as Henry Brown, aged eight, were admitted. His widowed mother had recently died at Richmond. He came to Sydney, destitute. Captain Scott sent him from the Central Police Office to the Asylum where he was admitted. Women such as Ann Elderbian came for their confinements. It was the second time in three years she had come to the Asylum, yet she had not lived with her husband during that time. The House Committee accepted Dean Cowper's recommendation, but ordered she be discharged after her confinement.

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1 House Committee minutes, 13 November 1866.
2 Minutes, 9 January 1866.
Dr Arthur Renwick\(^1\) was visiting physician for these years. He set the pace in pressing for improved

After serving as Honorary Physician to the Benevolent Society 1862-77, Arthur Renwick succeeded Deas Thomson as President in 1878. In the same year he also followed him as President of the Sydney Infirmary. He held various offices in connection with the Deaf, Dumb and Blind Institute. He was chairman of the S.C.R. Board from its inception in 1881 till 1901. He held political office as Minister for Mines (Parkes, 1881-3), and as Minister for Public Instruction (Dibbs-Jennings, 1886-7). He was a member of the Legislative Assembly 1879-83 and 1885-6, and of the Legislative Council 1886-1908, the year of his death. He was a member of the Senate of the University of Sydney from 1877 and Vice Chancellor 1889-92. He was a commissioner for N.S.W. at several international exhibitions, notably Chicago 1893.

Charitable work obviously absorbed much of his time. He was an able and energetic administrator. He was much concerned to improve the facilities available to the organisations with which he was connected. The Deaf, Dumb and Blind Institute, Darlington, the main front blocks of the Sydney Hospital, the Royal Hospital for Women, Paddington, and the Farm Homes of the S.C.R. Dept at Mittagong were all planned and erected under his supervision. He was also the leading figure in the legislative proceedings by which both Sydney Hospital (1881) and the Benevolent Society (1901) gained acts of incorporation.

From 1880 till 1900 Renwick was the dominant figure on the Sydney charitable scene. His views were often decisive: over the large plans for government asylums at Rookwood (below, p.210), on the Metropolitan Charity Organisation Society (p.333), on the old age pension (p.336), as well as in the affairs of the Benevolent Society. His energy in developing the administrative potential of the S.C.R. Board is likewise apparent (below, p.246 and also Govan, op. cit., p.290ff). Sometimes the newspapers made fun of his small stature and his limp, which dated from the gold rushes: the busy little doctor fussing about again (F.J. 2 December 1882). The more usual reaction was one of gratitude for his energy on behalf of the poor of the colony.

As noted in ch.1, no papers of Sir Arthur Renwick have yet been discovered.
conditions for these people.\footnote{General Committee minutes, 11 October 1864, 10 January 1865; re gas, additional wards, a new wing, money from the government.} His medical reports dominate the General Committee minutes in the 1860s. Of the unmarried lying-in women he wrote in 1869

...several were true objects of charity without home or friends....Had it not been for the benignant protection of this institution it would be difficult to tell what fate would have befallen them. Even as it was some of them were, so to speak, snatched from the jaws of death. In regard to many, however, no favourable opinion can be given...the system adopted by the Weekly Board of carefully examining the histories of the applicants, as well as enforcing an admission fee, is the best means of providing some check on the increase of this most shameful part of the Society's operations.\footnote{Ibid., 12 October 1869, p.291.}

Righteousness and humanity were mixed together, with a continuing willingness to provide some care even for the most degraded. It was a persistent theme, this large heartedness, in the life of the Society.

There were recurrent crises among the children living in the Asylum. Renwick's quarterly report for March-June 1867 had the sad news that 42 children had died of measles. He took care to emphasise the poor health of the children when admitted to the Asylum. He tabulated the parentage and health of 181 children in the Asylum on 20 May 1867. About 53 of them had inherited disease; 47 were illegitimate; 40 had a parent in gaol; 25 fathers were unknown (but these children were not
listed as illegitimate); 64 had only one parent and five were orphans. In such ways as these were the children handicapped who were admitted to the Asylum. 1 If they survived the early years of life they were sent on to the Destitute Children's Asylum at the government's expense.

In keeping with the shift in emphasis of the work of the Benevolent Society, the days of tempestuous annual meetings seemed over. Dull quiet gatherings dominated by George Allen and Arthur Renwick succeeded one another annually, in which tables of admissions, deaths, discharges and finances were submitted for public approval. 2

The weekly meetings of the House Committee continued to dispense outdoor relief, largely in kind sometimes augmented by money for rent payments. The numbers given in the annual reports are difficult to interpret. Many people obviously went on and off the books of the Society many times: if and how they were counted more than once is not clear. The reports from 1869 onwards give a figure which is consistently labelled. 3 There was a rise in the number of cases to more than 6,000 in 1871, a figure not again exceeded till the depths of the depression in 1893. The 1870s were a period of lessening demand for the services of the outdoor relief department.

1 Ibid., 9 July 1867.
2 E.g., Empire 31 January 1871, 30 January 1872.
3 See table 6.
Most of these listed were women: if the husband was out of work it was his wife who sought aid at the Asylum. There were cases of acute and immediate distress, such as Ann Cullen, whose husband was 'supposed lost at sea in the recent gales'. She had two young children. She was granted 5 and 5, £3 towards the cost of a mangle - almost the only honest source of income for a destitute widow - and the gifts of those present.\(^1\) Alternatively the Committee could be at odds with the applicant. Peter King, already suffering the penalty of discontinuance of his rations, applied for their restoration. He was granted, not the usual three months extension, but a mere fortnight. 'Upon which he insultingly told the Committee, they might keep it. No further assistance to be allowed.'\(^2\)

It was cases like that which give a hint at the occasional outbursts of proud independence, and which illustrate the righteous declaration of the Society in its Annual Report for 1867:

The process adopted by your Committee in regard to all claimants for relief has reference to the prevention of imposition, and the proper supply of the wants of the truly deserving; and before accepting any case they make a personal investigation on these points, - even when accepted as true objects of charity a rigid supervision of their character and mode of life is instituted.\(^3\)

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\(^1\) B.S., Acting Committee minutes, 5 July 1864.

\(^2\) House Committee (successor to the Acting Committee) minutes, 27 February 1866.

\(^3\) A.R. 1867, p.9.
Charity was not easy. The recipients might feel degraded. The donors often felt uneasy about the moral implications. The relationships assumed by that annual report - stewardship of money, judgement of desert, moral supervision, were characteristic not only of the Benevolent Society, but of nearly all organised charitable effort in the community in these years.

Poverty was real. Charity was seen as a moral and social responsibility. But it was not a responsibility to be exercised lightly. If the modern observer is disturbed by the assumptions of moral as well as social superiority in the work of the Society, and especially in its outdoor relief activities, he can yet acknowledge this large hearted sense of concern by men of good will. There was no legal responsibility here. It was a charitable society, conducted voluntarily, out of motives that we can continue to admire. Probably - though how can this really be more than a surmise - the poor who received this charity in Sydney or in the similarly conducted country societies were far more generously treated than their fellows in England. Those in the old country faced labour tests and a legally constructed system with many powers and little love. In New South Wales care for the poor still seemed to bear the marks of personal concern - of love - as well as a desire for a well ordered, decent society.
CHAPTER 3
CARE FOR 'CHILDREN OF THE PERISHING AND DANGEROUS
CLASSES, AND FOR JUVENILE OFFENDERS', 1850-75

1. The English background

In England between 1846 and 1870, between the establishment of Mary Carpenter's first Ragged School and the Education Act passed by the Liberal government in 1870, public concern, not only for the education of the working classes, but also for the better care of the 'children of the perishing and dangerous classes' had been growing. It was in line with the earlier work of the National and British and Foreign School Societies, and of the appointment of the Education Committee of the Privy Council in 1839. The failure of the education clauses of Graham's Factory bill of 18431 and the promulgation of the Education Committee's two minutes of 18462 were preludes to Mary Carpenter's agitation.

The voluntaryists had succeeded in staving off an anglican controlled elementary education system financed out of the rates, although the Privy Council Committee was injecting a degree of state direction. For the

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1 His speech on the second reading of the original bill, 28 February 1843 is in English Historical Documents vol. 12, pt.i, no.237, p.863, and on the amended proposals, no.238, p.863.
poorest, most underprivileged children in the community, most politicians preferred 'to follow in the footsteps of individual philanthropy and individual enterprise'.

Mary Carpenter's efforts were aimed at awakening that individual philanthropy, and at gaining some state aid. By 'the children of the perishing and dangerous classes' she meant those children who were in danger of becoming criminals because of the life they were forced to live: their families, their homes, the ways they earned their living all combined to threaten their existence. They were in danger of 'perishing'. This term she drew from orthodox Christian usage for the fate of the sinner, applying it in a material sense to the situation of these children. She published her book in 1851. Out of it grew a widely publicised conference at Birmingham in the same year. The book, in particular, was a sustained endeavour to define and establish the existence of these perishing children, as well as those who were, though of tender years, already criminals. The idea was to withdraw them from their slum environments and to place them in wholesome institutions which were called industrial schools or reformatories. In them they would be exposed to the improving effects of good lives, sound teaching and industrial training. The distinction between the two terms was never clear in practice. 'Reformatories' were industrial schools in

1 W.L. Burn, op. cit., p.151.
2 Reformatory Schools for the Children of the Perishing and Dangerous Classes and for Juvenile Offenders.
which most of the children had been convicted of criminal offences. All of them soon came to rely on the power of the state to gain their inmates. As a variant to these 'industrial schools', day schools were established in the slum areas themselves. These were the 'ragged schools'.

The reformers gained the permissive provision of the Act for the Better Care and Reformation of Youthful Offenders which assumed, not that the state would erect reformatories, but that private bodies would do this. Once in existence the state was, empowered under this act to make use of these institutions by first certifying their acceptability after inspection, and then arranging (if the managers were willing) for children convicted of criminal offences and sentenced to at least 14 days imprisonment to be sent to them for periods of two to five years on the expiry of their prison sentences. The state would pay for their upkeep. By 1857 there were 40 certified reformatories conducted by various public societies with 1,866 children in them.

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17 and 18 Vict. (1854), c.86.
Further acts and minutes extended permissive state support to the working of ragged schools\(^1\), reformatories and industrial schools.\(^2\) The Industrial Schools Act of 1857\(^3\) allowed the managers of an industrial school, when it had been certified, to receive children remanded indefinitely as vagrants by the justices and also payment for their upkeep.\(^4\)

The state's participation was both permissive and coercive. Local and central authorities were permitted to come to arrangements with privately conducted institutions, but not to conduct these themselves. But judicial power over individual children was extensive, not only over those convicted, but also over those exposed to the worst degradations of industrial cities. Voluntary philanthropy by the charitable was to be encouraged and supported, but not directed, by the state. The children of the perishing classes were to be coerced into reformation. The ambiguity of the whole endeavour remained unresolved.

\(^1\) 18 and 19 Vict. (1855), c.34, allowed Poor Law Guardians to give parents additional aid to allow them to send children (4-16 years) to such schools; the Committee on Education offered grants for equipment to industrial schools in 1852; another minute, of 2 June 1856, extended the range of application of the grants. Burn, loc. cit.
\(^2\) 20 and 21 Vict. (1857), c.55, permitted Quarter Sessions or Borough Sessions to make grants to certified reformatories for 'permanent objects'. Ibid.
\(^3\) 20 and 21 Vict. (1857), c.48.
\(^4\) Burn, loc. cit.
2. **First efforts in New South Wales, 1852-5**

In N.S.W. between 1850 and 1875 the approaches to the care of children were very much in the English idiom. An attempt was made to legislate for their custody by the state in 1852. A public society backed by the sanctions of law and by substantial government grants was established in the same year. While the Destitute Children's Asylum grew in response to the need of providing care for such children, others continued to press for the legislative control of a broader range of children. After several attempts, acts were passed in 1866 providing for the establishment of government industrial schools and reformatories. The institutional approach to child care reached its apogee. The orphan schools at Parramatta, the Destitute Children's Asylum at Randwick, the **Vernon**, Biloela and the facilities at the Benevolent Asylum between them housed nearly 1,500 children in 1875. In the community admission to any of these institutions was seen as a misfortune or even a punishment. Their conduct was rule-dominated, impersonal and often hardly calculated to reform. The barrack legend was being formed.

With the establishment of the National School Board in N.S.W. in 1848\(^1\) ordinary and respectable working class people could arrange to have their children taught. They also had access to the denominational schools. For destitute and deserted children some provision was made in the Orphan schools, so very much a relic of past

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\(^1\) Discussed in Barrett, *That Better Country*, Part II.
authoritarian techniques. The act establishing the National School Board gave a sideward glance at the problem of destitute children when it included a clause allowing the establishment of industrial schools. But nothing was ever done on this basis.

If the problem was not as acute in distribution or in scale as it was in England, yet the needs of children of the 'perishing and dangerous classes' were nonetheless identifiable. In 1852 James Martin presented a bill to the Legislative Council 'for the relief of destitute children and the prevention of juvenile delinquency'. Instead of relying on the vague clauses of the 1848 act on this subject, he was eager to make specific provision for these children. He proposed that the government incorporate a board to act on its behalf, with power to conduct an institution for destitute children. His


2 S.M.H. 30 June 1852; second reading 27 July 1852.
definition of the children who might be committed was wide.¹ Unlike the English acts then on the statute books, he proposed that 'any constable, or peace officer or other person' might apprehend them, and have them dealt with before a J.P. Again taking a more coercive line than the English acts, he proposed that the board have powers over the children in loco parentis, and that they be given an additional legal power of coercion, for example if they absconded. The governing body was obviously modelled on the National School Board. The powers it was to be given were controversial in their extent in 1852. But in effect, these powers were possessed by English justices, or were soon to be granted to them. But the bill revealed that characteristic colonial emphasis on the direct participation of the central administration in providing powers, purse and personnel to deal with this social problem. There were not the local authorities who stood so usefully between Whitehall and local problems in England.

On the other hand, that other great alternative for mid Victorians, corporate public action, was already moving, as the Colonial Secretary, Deas Thomson, hastened

¹ '... every infant of the age of sixteen years and under, lodging, living, residing or wandering in the company of reputed thieves, or persons who have no visible means of support, or with common prostitutes, who shall have no visible means of support, or who shall have no fixed place of abode, or who shall have no parents or guardians, and be without employment, or means of support, or who shall be found begging about any street...; or who shall be found habitually wandering or loitering about the streets, highways or public places in no ostensible lawful occupation...' S.M.H. 30 June 1852.
to point out. A society of gentlemen, he among them, had recently been formed to care for this very group of children. They proposed to accept children who were subject to the vagrancy laws, lost, or surrendered by their parents. Moreover, he expressed a typical Victorian value judgement in warning of the danger of giving too much power to a government instrumentality, thus not only endangering the rights of the individual, but threatening the workings of private charity. So, despite Martin's doubts about the capacity of the new society which he expressed to the Council, and his disapproval of large public grants without supervision to non-government institutions, the bill was referred to a select committee on the motion of George Allen.¹ (He was another promoter of the new society.) The committee, with Martin as chairman, was reappointed in 1853 and 1854.

W.C. McLerie, Inspector of Police, gave the colonial colour of the problem of destitute children with almost the first answer to the committee:

Q: What do you mean by neglected children?
A: Children whose fathers have gone to the mines, probably, and whose mothers are of bad character and do not pay any attention to their education or morals.²

It was probably the sharp social dislocations produced by the gold rushes which was forcing action in the colony, as distinct from discussion on the matter. There is no

¹ Legislative Council, V. & P. 27 July 1852.
² Select Committee on the Destitute Children's Bill, Evidence, 1 September 1852, q.6; V. & P. 1854, vol.2, p.173ff.
direct evidence for Martin's own motives for presenting the bill. He spent little time justifying it before the Council. These social conditions, possibly the English agitation, and a general sense of charitable concern are then the forces which might be suggested as the most significant in explaining his action.

When the committee met, its attention was focused on the definition of the types of children who might be dealt with, and on the different types of institution which the government might establish. There was little reference to the English system of certification and capitation payments. For the children whom McLerie described there were perhaps the orphan schools, or the Benevolent Asylum. In neither case were there legal sanctions to enforce the removal of children from undesirable environments, as Martin's bill envisaged. For older children, say over ten, there was really nowhere to go, especially if they were 'tainted with crime'. They could only be sent to the Darlinghurst jail. Some efforts were made there, admittedly, to protect them, by housing them in the female wing of the prison.\(^1\) McLerie obviously disapproved of this, and willingly accepted the committee's suggestion that a separate institution be established.\(^2\) The Chief Justice, Sir Alfred Stephen, wished to extend the definition of the children to be dealt with even further, to include

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\(^1\) Ibid., q.62.
\(^2\) Q.89.
those 'whose parents shall be habitual drunkards or shall be under any sentence of imprisonment, or to hard labour for a period exceeding six months....'\(^1\) There was no doubt that children falling into these categories and those described by Martin and McLerie existed in the ill-controlled, poorly constructed, badly sewered, Sydney of the 1850s, most notably in the back lanes of Sussex and Kent Streets reaching down to Darling Harbour and along to the Rocks.\(^2\) Certainly the master of the new asylum for destitute children, Mr Edhouse, did not mince matters when he told the committee of the parents of their first 50 children: 'their mothers are generally prostitutes, their fathers convicts, some of them mad; - nearly all the mothers...are or have been prostitutes, or...at least drunkards'.\(^3\) The committee listened to various suggestions on sites and some on the relative merits of nautical and land-based institutions. Most witnesses accepted the coercive premises of the bill, and the assumption that the government should act.

However, when it came to the point, the problem was dealt with in the more usual mid nineteenth century mode of voluntary philanthropy through a public society. The Society for the Destitute Children's Asylum was formed

\(^1\) 7 September 1852, q.58.

\(^2\) See below p.130, for a reference to the evidence taken by Parkes' Select Committee on the Condition of the Working Classes of Sydney, 1859-60. Plate III illustrates similar conditions in 1875.

\(^3\) Select Committee on the Destitute Children's Bill, Evidence, 3 September 1852, q.8.
in 1852.\(^1\) It was the existence of this society which was given in the Committee's brief report (December 1854) as the excuse for the withdrawal of Martin's bill.

George Allen had often resisted direct government intervention in the affairs of poor relief.\(^2\) It was he who had secured the committee on the bill. He and many other supporters of the established order were publicly countenancing the Destitute Children's Asylum. It would appear that official policy was to prefer indirect government support for charitable works - following 'in the footprints of private philanthropy and individual enterprise' - just as Gipps has written to the promoters of the Melbourne Hospital in 1842,\(^3\) and Cowper was to write in 1862\(^4\) to the Benevolent Society about outdoor relief.

A few months before Martin's Select Committee finally reported in December 1854, Henry Parkes gained the

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\(^1\) As with many other 'good works', the moving spirit was Dr H.G. Douglass. The initial meeting was held in his home on 23 February 1852, attended by G. Allen, T. Cowleshaw, J. Comrie, A.G.G. Owen, J. McLerie, Archdeacon McEncroe, and the Rev. A.H. Stephen. The first annual meeting was held on 19 July 1853. J. Coulter, The Randwick Asylum, Sydney, 1916, pp.5 and 18.

\(^2\) E.g., above, pp.54-5.

\(^3\) Above, p.42.

\(^4\) Above, p.81.
appointment of a Select Committee on a closely related topic, proposals for a Nautical School.\(^1\) Parkes put his view of the problem in much more hopeful and constructive terms than Martin. He was concerned to give a vocation to many children of Sydney who were currently without prospects. He hoped they could be trained to the sea. He resisted the criticisms of Plunkett (Attorney General) that the Destitute Children's Asylum and the orphan schools were sufficient by emphasising his vision of improving the commerce of Sydney, not providing for destitute children. He had a constructive approach: there was much more emphasis on opportunity and improvement, with all the echoes of self-help and upward mobility from his home town of Birmingham that these concepts implied. The report of this committee was particularly enthusiastic about the Marine Society's ship at Deptford, and simply urged imitation of it in Sydney, with the government providing half the costs. The government, in the debate on its reception, argued that the proposed school was unnecessary or too expensive. A few days later, however, the Council was informed that £2,000 was to be placed on the estimates for 1856 for the purchase of a hulk in which to locate a nautical school, and that another £1,000 was to be available on a pound for pound basis as a subsidy towards running expenses. Nonetheless, the accompanying message from the Governor

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Captain King, Martin, Cowper, and Allen were on both Select Committees.
General cast doubts on the wisdom of the scheme. During February and March 1856 Parkes and some other members of the Sydney Chamber of Commerce sought to pursue the project further by holding public meetings. They met with little success. The excitement of the coming elections for the new Assembly and the growth of the Destitute Children's Asylum had taken the edge off interest in this other scheme. It was thought enough, despite Parkes' emphasis on the need to provide vocational training for children older than those being cared for in that asylum. Those who controlled policy and the influential people in Sydney who had already given their support to the new children's asylum did not consider these children worthy of such expensive effort.

Just how great was the concern in the community for destitute children in the 1850s is difficult to determine. That two vocal politicians should take the question up, and that a society for establishing a destitute children's asylum should emerge, suggests a wide degree of public interest. Martin and Parkes might have been seeking to criticise the government and

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2 S.M.H. 28 February 1856; 6 March 1856 (ed); McDonald, op. cit., pp.221-3.
establish their political images in the community. But they were clearly inspired by a genuine concern for these underprivileged children, even if support for their proposals faded away. They were challenged by the impact of the diggings and the pressures of the rapid growth of the population of Sydney. The work of English reformers and the decisions of the English legislature might have helped towards the definition of possible solutions to the problem. But the problem's existence had most certainly been recognised.

The Destitute Children's Asylum

As we have just suggested, the establishment of the Destitute Children's Asylum arose out of the same general concern for the community's children that prompted Martin's bill and Parkes' Select Committee. Of these three public responses to the problem, it was the most immediately successful.\(^1\) It represents most purely in mid nineteenth century New South Wales the characteristic mode of fulfilling community responsibility for the less fortunate: a public society backed by subscriptions from the community, governed by an elected board, and supported by government patronage in the form of subsidies, legislation, and later capitation payments for services rendered. Its approach to the care of the children in its charge, moreover, underlined current mores which placed such store on utility and economical administration. The children were to provide most of the

\(^1\) Govan, op. cit.
labour force, and incidentally learn skills which made them valued additions to the colonial labour force.

McLerie insisted to Martin's committee that the newly established asylum was intended for the reception of children entirely untainted by crime. Other supporters pointed more to the debaucheries of the parents. The Reverend A.H. Stephen, Honorary Secretary of the Destitute Children's Asylum, argued that such parents should have no voice at all in the fate of their children. Sir Alfred Stephen, the Chief Justice, asserted that no parent was at liberty to rear children to a life of profligacy, or to abandon them to the streets. The first annual report emphasised the existence of such parents. In 1855, at the annual meeting, Sir Alfred was more specific. He believed that 'it was the wretched passion for liquor - a passion that could not be suppressed - that in many instances induced parents to abandon their children to vice and misery of every description'. The Society had undertaken a work of rescue and reformation, claiming large powers of coercion and making large assumptions about middle class paternalism and the unworthiness of the lower orders.

1 Select Committee on the Destitute Children's Bill, Evidence, 1 September 1852, q.53.
2 3 September 1852, q.30.
3 7 September 1852, q.57.
4 Coulter, p.18.
5 S.M.H. 31 July 1855.
Its first location was at Ormond House, Paddington.\(^1\) It was criticised in 1855 by McLerie and Merewether along with the parents who brought their children, for countenancing the idea that it was little more than a cheap boarding school.\(^2\) Despite these early problems, the Society was a social and financial success, attracting large donations, the most distinguished patronage, and generous government support. It drew support from the respectable in the community in a way unequalled by any other charitable institution in this period. The attraction of children, vice-regal patronage and a well publicised social problem, all helped to strengthen its position and leave it unworried by government pressure or public criticism in its first fifteen years. Dr Cuthill, who had been its first honorary medical officer, left the Society £11,000 during 1855. This was used to erect the asylum at Randwick, that stern group of buildings\(^3\) which became the symbol of both the Society's achievement and the barrack legend. The laying of the foundation stone of the first wing at Randwick was recorded in five fulsome columns by the \textit{Herald}: after all, the occasion was graced by the presence of the Governor General, the Chief Justice, the Colonial Secretary and

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Board of Inquiry into Charitable Institutions, proceedings at the Institution for the Relief of Destitute Children, p.17; V. & P. 1855, vol.1, p.981ff.}
\footnote{Ibid., pp.16-7.}
\footnote{Now the Prince of Wales Hospital.}
\end{footnotes}
many other dignitaries. In an editorial the philanthropic rationale of the institution was expounded:

He who snatches an individual from habits of vice, and places him in the path of civilisation and virtue, does more for the practical elevation of mankind than the admirer of a thousand theoretical schemes of social economy.  

The outcasts of the community were to be rescued by means of this great community effort. In the Act of Incorporation (1856), the Deserted Wives and Children Act (1858), and in an amendment to the 1856 Act in 1863, the power of the Directors over the children was clearly established. They could even overrule the parents once children were in their care. If the parents were unfit, or unable, to support the children, they could be cared for by the Society. It could gain an order for the maintenance of the children, whether the parent had surrendered the child voluntarily or not. The Society retained control over admissions. Neither government, magistrates, parents nor Benevolent Society were able to disturb their supremacy till the 1880s. Very early, minimum standards of age and health were established and adhered to despite pressure from the Benevolent Society,

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1 9 May 1856.
2 Ibid., ed.
3 20 Vic. no.19.
4 22 Vic. no.6.
5 27 Vic. no.16.
which was as a result forced to provide care for infants and sickly children who did not qualify for admission at Randwick. Likewise the government, grateful for the existence of an institution for the care of destitute children, made little fuss over the rate at which children admitted at its request were supported. It was not until the 1870s that government financial support became an instrument by which the Society was forced to change certain practices.¹ Meanwhile the children, when they reached the age of 12, were apprenticed out for 6 years to respectable members of the community.

A file in the Colonial Secretary's papers illustrates the working of the system.² In August 1865 the Police Magistrate at Wagga appealed to the Colonial Secretary for help in caring for three of the children of Patrick Ryan, just sentenced to 18 months jail for larceny. His wife was dead. Two local people who had been caring for the children were no longer willing or able to do so. Neighbourly help had broken down. The Colonial Secretary minuted that the government had no funds to support them. The principles of economical government and minimum interference had come into operation. It was a matter for private charity, and so the matter was referred to the Destitute Children's

¹ See e.g., Inspector of Public Charities, Report 1876. V. & P. 1876-7, vol.4, pp.914-5.
² All at C.S.I.L. 66/820. The final paper, reporting the admission of the children and the paupers, is dated 24 February 1866.
Asylum. Their secretary urged that the children be sent to the Benevolent Society, where they could be received immediately. No pathetic appeals could force the waiver of his Society's rules. If passed medically, they could then enter the Randwick Asylum. Ryan now urged that his fourth child, four years old, also be admitted, rather than be left in local hands. When it was ordered that the children be sent to the Benevolent Asylum the next problem was to arrange transport and to pay for it. The Inspector General of Police was able to point out that there was a vote for 'the maintenance of deserted children, expenses of transmission etc.' which would serve. So a carrier was found, an order for the admission to the Benevolent Asylum at government expense prepared, and the children very soon deposited there. But the Bench at Wagga had taken the bit between its teeth. Three destitute old men were sent unannounced by the same carrier and dumped at the Pitt Street Asylum. The surprised officials in Sydney found beds for them: temporarily in the watch house, more permanently in the Government Asylums for the Infirm and Destitute. The word had moved slowly to Wagga on the changes introduced in 1862. Presumably the Ryan children, when medically acceptable, were forwarded to the Destitute Children's Asylum and there maintained at government expense till they were apprenticed out at the age of 12.

Life at the Asylum was, by modern standards, an inhuman, machine-like existence. According to mid nineteenth century philosophy, however, it was an efficient and successful school for destitute children. Expense had to be kept to a minimum, so the children did
most of the work. What hope had the tiny staff of giving individual care or kindness to 4-600 children? Schooling took third place, behind domestic duties and learning a 'trade', be it only laundering. The cows, 14 acres of vegetable garden, bootmaking, food preparation and the laundry dominated their lives. Most of the children were under 12 years of age. It was not till the criticisms of the Empire in the 1870s, together with the Windeyer report and two scandals in 1875-7, awakened a different response in the community to these techniques, that any effort was made to change them. Till then it was assumed that, beyond the principal task of keeping costs to a minimum, the institution was fulfilling its rescuing, protecting task. G.F. Wise, then secretary, replied to a critical editorial in the Herald with a glowing description of the benefits of pure air, food, exercise and labour which the children enjoyed. Well fed animals, these representatives of the lower orders were not destined for great things. What more was to be expected?

3. Towards industrial schools and reformatories, 1855-75

Concern for children older or more 'tainted' than could be admitted to the Destitute Children's Asylum was voiced at public meetings in support of a nautical school

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1 Govan, p.166, p.173ff.
2 Wise to S.M.H. 5 November 1875, in reply to an ed. of 1 November 1875.
in February 1856 and again in May 1859.\footnote{Above, p.122; McDonald, op. cit., p.224.} But with the opening of the Randwick buildings of the Destitute Children's Asylum in 1858 and the fulsome hopes associated with it, interest in additional or alternative facilities waned. How could it be otherwise when the annual report of that Society for 1858 rejoiced that

...a more pleasing sight cannot be imagined than that of those poor children, so lately the victims of cruel and unnatural neglect, assembling to partake of their simple, though abundant fare, and offering praise to God for the food He has provided.\footnote{S.M.H. 10 February 1859.}

But with the evidence taken before Parkes' Select Committee into the Condition of the Working Classes of Sydney, these fears for the welfare of the youth of the community broke out again. One Inspector of Police who gave evidence to the Committee implied that there were perhaps 200 prostitutes below the age of 16 living on the Darling Harbour side of the city.\footnote{Select Committee on the Condition of the Working Classes of Sydney, Report. V. & P. 1859-60, vol.4, pp.1263-1468. Evidence, qq.348-9 and appendix at p.179 (Insp. Harrison).} The decrepit housing of the area and the lawless vigour of children who lived there shocked the committee, and others too when the report was presented early in 1860. The Destitute Children's Asylum altered its rules to allow the admission of children of profligate parents who
voluntarily surrendered them. In the government appropriations later that year there was a large vote to finance extensions at Randwick.

In February 1860 the Herald greeted with pleasure the plans for the establishment of a Ragged School in Sussex Street. It was being supported by a group of anglican clergy and others, all horrified with what they learnt from the Parkes' committee report. The Herald also noted the need of an institution for the more ill-disciplined boys, who could not be dealt with at day (i.e. Ragged) schools or the Destitute Children's Asylum. A month later the Reverend W. Cuthbertson gave a public lecture on 'Charles Nash and his Reformatory Homes for Adult Criminals'. The Ragged School was to open on the following Monday. This meeting, chaired by Mr Joy, who, for the next six years, was to conduct the ragged schools established in Sydney, was intended to publicise them. These schools, though not residential institutions, were conscious efforts at reclamation. The teachers were as much concerned to civilize the children as to teach them, and as much interested in influencing the degraded parents as seeing the children had clothes. They worked earnestly, hoping

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1 A.R., 1859, S.M.H. 21 February 1860.
2 29 February 1860.
3 2 April 1860.
4 S.M.H. 30 March 1860. Parkes moved the vote of thanks.
for true Christian conversions and genuine improvements in home environments. So, opening 2-4 p.m. daily and 7.30-9 p.m. on 3 nights, the committee was glad to report an average attendance at the school of 41 in the afternoons and 55 in the evenings,¹ despite the preference some boys had for walking on their hands or fighting.²

Evidence that Cowper, at least, was also interested in this problem is available. As Colonial Secretary he instructed the Sheriff to report on public buildings at Windsor and Parramatta that might be suitable for a boys' reformatory.³ The Roman Catholic Archbishop John Bede Polding was also concerned. He forwarded a scheme to the Governor for state-supported reformatories modelled on those operating in England on the basis of the 1858 legislation. He hoped for legal powers to detain children, enforce maintenance from parents, and for a capitation payment of 8/- per week from the government. He was aiming at a religious establishment, being convinced of the necessity for Christian foundations to any work of reformation. In this

¹ Articles and editorials in S.M.H. 12 May 1860, 23 July, 1 August, 22 August 1860.
² A.R. 1860, S.M.H. 2 February 1861.
³ Sheriff to Public Works Department, 17 June 1861, C.S.I.L. 61/2544 with Public Works in letter 64/1907. These papers are enclosed in a C.S.I.L. S.B., but a careful check has not re-located them. Their existence can be proved from the C.S.I.L. Registers.
institution it would be possible to place juvenile offenders for three years or more, thus separating them from the evil association of their homes and parents and training them in industrial occupations, while forming their characters along wholesome lines at the same time.  

On the loan estimates in January 1862, Cowper arranged for a vote of £20,000 to encourage the formation of juvenile reformatory. His views on this occasion on control, site and so on were very general. But they must have been specific enough, for according to Cowper speaking on the Industrial Schools Bill of 1866, Polding refused to continue negotiations in 1862 when he learnt it was the government's intention to group the children of all denominations in one institution. Meanwhile the slow process of searching for a cheap, adequate, site continued and then ground into silence.

Another approach was made in 1863, this time from the Sydney Bench of magistrates. Captain Scott wrote to the Colonial Secretary urging the establishment of a juvenile reformatory. Lacking any other provision, he pointed out that he and his fellow magistrates were forced to commit young offenders to the common jail. This in turn produced an unwillingness among the public

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1 Archbishop Polding to Colonial Secretary, 16 September 1861, in ibid.
2 Colonial Architect to U. Sec., Public Works Department, 10 May 1862, re sites at Port Macquarie and at former sugar refinery at Canterbury, in ibid.
to prosecute. If there was an institution available, for boys and for girls, from 7 to 16 years then:

...many could be saved if removed from the demoralizing control of their parents and from temptation to commit crime,...and thus become, in time, honest industrious and creditable members of society.¹

Richard Sadlier took the matter more directly in hand by introducing a private member's bill in the Legislative Assembly on 29 December 1863.² This evangelical protestant, supporter of the radical interest, for 22 years master of the protestant orphan school and a frequent controversialist in the columns of the Herald,³ wished to legislate for government established reformatories to combat 'youthful depravity, vagrancy and crime in our cities, towns and countryside'. He defined a child as one from 5 to 15 years found by two justices to be vagrant, destitute, associating with thieves, disorderly or guilty of a misdemeanour. The police were to be given power to take such children into custody, the justices to commit them to a reformatory in preference to a jail, and to compel parents to support the children where wilful neglect was shown. (This last clause was similar to the provision of the Act of 1863 applying to the Destitute Children's Asylum which

¹ Captain Scott to Colonial Secretary, 23 September 1863, in ibid.
² S.M.H. 9 January 1864.
³ A.D.B. vol.2., s.v.
provided that two justices could compel the father of a child voluntarily surrendered to the Asylum to contribute up to £1 a week). Sadlier's bill, however, was not proceeded with. Politics were extremely fluid, and the session in its last days.

A little over a year later William Forster, by now ex-Colonial Secretary, introduced a similar bill. He distinguished between a 'destitute child', whose parent represented himself before two justices as unable to support the child, and a 'vagrant child', as one found begging, wandering without a home, in a brothel, committing an offence or uncontrollable. His bill provided for the establishment of government reformatories, and for the certification of private institutions.\(^1\) Again the bill was still-born. Cowper was proceeding along a different line. Tenders were called in the **Government Gazette** in August 1865 for a ship suitable as a boys' training institution.\(^2\) The Executive Council agreed to the Colonial Secretary's minute that

> The commencement of a Reformatory Prison in which colonial youths sentenced to the Darlinghurst and other Gaols may be confined, may I think best be made by having a commodious vessel in which they may be imprisoned, as a hulk.\(^3\)

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1 S.M.H. 24 March 1865.
3 Colonial Secretary's minute, 20 August 1865; Executive Council minute no. 3301, 1865, 25 August 1865, in ibid.
Finally Cowper presented the government's bill in November 1865. The definitions were more cautious, consistent with Cowper's remarks in this and related fields. He was far less willing than Martin to take away liberty. The children who could be committed to a Reformatory (to be established by the government) were convicted juvenile offenders 10-16 years, neglected children under ten who were convicted or found begging without a home or living in a brothel, and children under 14 found to be uncontrollable. Private industrial schools were to be certified and were to be permitted to receive neglected children for periods of over one year. Maintenance costs of these children could be met by the government, and parents could be ordered to support their children. However, this bill was discharged because not properly introduced as a money bill - probably a tactical move by the Martin faction, now trying their strength in the house. The Roman Catholics were still interested in certified institutions. They came in deputation to the new Colonial Secretary (Parkes) in order to press their point of view, knowing the government had something in mind. But Parkes was evasive.

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1 Cp. their contrasting positions on Martin's Workhouse Bill of 1866, above p.93.
2 S.M.H. 9 November 1865.
3 S.M.H. 16 November 1865.
4 S.M.H. 18 July 1866.
It is with a sense of relief that one greets the two bills which Martin successfully carried in August 1866. They reached back to his bill of 1852 as well as exploiting the English Acts of 1854 and 1858. They also emphasised the distinction between industrial schools and reformatories. Two separate bills were introduced - one for the better care of destitute children,¹ the other for the establishment of reformatories.² Children under 16 years of age could be sent to the industrial schools. A wide range of situations from which the children could be taken was defined,³ with less emphasis on habitual behaviour and more on a complete description of the possible environments. To the reformatories might be sent any child under 16 who was convicted of an offence punishable by 14 days imprisonment or more. Since the industrial schools could be either public or private, while reformatories would be conducted only by the state, this distinction probably was an effort to quieten those who feared the contamination of destitute children by children who were actually convicted of offences. When compared with the three earlier bills, Martin's show a much more comprehensive and specific approach to the children who could be sent to industrial schools. The minimum period of punishment (14 days) making committal

¹ To become 30 Vic., no.2.
² To become 30 Vic., no.4.
³ The children of habitual drunkards were not included specifically, as Sir Alfred Stephen had suggested in 1852.
to a reformatory possible was, as in England, available to any bench in summary jurisdiction. Though the contrast is only relative, Martin was more willing than Cowper and Forster to intervene positively. He was less concerned about liberty and more pessimistic about the environment in which these children were living. He was, too, a more whole-hearted supporter of the concept of institutional control for the less competent members of the community. Parents who neglected their children were to lose all rights over them, could be compelled to pay for their support, and were to take second place to the arrangements made by the superintendent when apprenticing the children. Only in their religious faith was any positive contribution expected from them, and even then it was clearly envisaged that the Colonial Secretary would have to decide in default of the parents.

It is worth pointing out here that Henry Parkes developed a paternal and proprietary pride in these two acts and in the Vernon which was to house the boys.\footnote{See e.g. his remarks in \textit{Fifty Years in the Making of Australian History}, London, 1892, pp.163-4, where he ascribes the two acts to Martin, but claims sole credit for the purchase of the Vernon. The C.S.I.L. S.B. 4/761.2 contains the contemporary administrative evidence. That file shows that Cowper's government, having called for tenders in August 1865, were ready to purchase the Vernon by the end of September 1865. The reversal in the Assembly may have stopped it; in any case Parkes took the matter up again in November 1866 and concluded the purchase of the Vernon by January 1867. Like the discussions over the necessity for an industrial school, these administrative activities show a broad acceptance of the need for action among the politicians.} Certainly he had proposed a nautical school in 1855.
But it was Martin's more rigorous and limited plan which was passed into law. Moreover, Cowper had got the money voted in 1862, and had already entered into negotiations with the owners of the Vernon before Martin and Parkes came to power. There was little disagreement that the government had to do something. Other matters took priority in the legislative program till the 1866 coalition turned its attention to the matter. In other words Parkes' claim to paternity is somewhat misleading, despite his pride in the institution, which was a popular sight on Sydney harbour for many years.

When the schools were established, moreover, Parkes was less constructive than he might have been. No private industrial schools were ever certified. Since these would have been conducted directly by the denominations, notably the Roman Catholics, the direct sectarian provocation was felt to be too great to attempt to get votes from Parliament. But the failure to allow such private schools to be established meant a deliberate narrowing of options, and a consequent focus on the administrative responsibility of the state. Critics in the 1870s did not hesitate to publicise the incapacity of these state institutions to protect or reforms for the state it was urged that the community be substituted. Others were to continue to call for institutions conducted on religious lines. Parkes' answer was that the need for reformatories was minimal, and that the state alone could conduct industrial schools for children for whom it had to provide maintenance.
The purchase of the Vernon, already in progress, was soon completed. It was proclaimed a Public Industrial School in the Government Gazette of 10 May 1867. The Girls Industrial School was proclaimed on 6 August 1867, in the building 'formerly occupied as a Military Barracks at Newcastle'.\(^1\) A portion of it was later specified as a Reformatory School.\(^2\) Such action was never taken for the Vernon.

The population of the schools is shown in Table 8. The first ten years of operation produced persistent problems connected with the definition or classification of the children, and with the more general problem of institutional care. The Vernon seemed to flourish, but the girls school was dogged by a series of spectacular riots. Yet both basically were involved in the same issues. McLerie, in a report to the Colonial Secretary in 1871 in response to Robertson's query about falling numbers,\(^3\) suggested that at first the effect of the acts was to check the neglect of children by their parents, if only to avoid coming under police surveillance. Certain classes of children were not covered by the act, namely boys convicted of a crime because there was no reformatory to which they could be sent. Boys engaged in some nominal trade such as selling matches also escaped

\(^1\) Col. Sec.'s minute for Executive Council, 15 April 1867, C.S.M. 16507.
\(^2\) Government Gazette, 22 January 1869.
\(^3\) 30 August 1871, C.S.I.L. 71/6269, in S.B. 'Biloela Industrial School, 1873-75', 4/796.3.
its provisions. Moreover, magistrates were unwilling to send the children to the Vernon against the wishes of the parents. Despite the strong words of the act about the subordination of parents' wishes, the law in practice was softer and more co-operative. Indeed, too co-operative where parents were willing. There is no doubt that the Vernon became the recipient of many unwanted children, who were more than destitute and very much in need of reformation. Parents were said to be escaping their responsibilities, and offloading them onto the state.¹ By the time the Charities Royal Commission came to hear evidence from Fosbery, the Reformatory Act was said to be a dead letter, while the Industrial School was being peopled by children of both destitute and immoral classes. Magistrates, ignorant of the distinction or unwilling to recognise it, appeared to send all without inquiry when requested by the parents.²

The girls schools had, underneath the colourful events of riots, defiance, scandal and destruction, a similar experience: one of the basic factors producing the riots at Newcastle in March 1871 was the mixture in the Industrial School of various sorts of girls. Some of them were suffering from venereal disease.³ Their

1 Empire 22 August 1872.
2 R.C.P.C. 1873-4, Evidence, q.2423ff., 9 July 1873 (Edmund Fosbery).
3 Superintendent, Girls' Industrial School to U. Sec., Col. Sec.'s Department, 9 December 1869, C.S.I.L. 69/9549 in S.B. 'Inspector of Charities Reports, 1868-75', 4/810.2.
experience of authority only led them to assault it -
by escape, by window breaking, by

singing obscene songs, others cursing and swearing,
others cutting up their beds and bedding and throwing
it out the windows, others...breaking the iron
bedsteads...[others] also destroyed the chamber
utensils, scattering the contents on the floor...
[others] stripped naked and danced in view of the
street.¹

Similar outbreaks occurred on several occasions at
Cockatoo Island, whence the girls school and the
reformatory were removed in April 1871.² While McLerie
hoped for a reformatory for boys in order to allow those
on the Vernon to enjoy the full beneficial effects of the
institution, he could only see 'Biloela', the aboriginal
name for Cockatoo Island which was given to the girls
industrial school and the reformatory, a place for
criminals. The other children sent there, perhaps out of
family poverty, only learnt bad habits and evil
practices from those already contaminated. Those who were
only destitute, and probably younger, should, he believed,
be sent to the Destitute Children's Asylum at Randwick.³

¹
Senior Sgt. J.F. Lane, Newcastle, to Inspector of Police
G. Read, Sydney, 28 March 1871, C.S.I.L. 71/2272 in S.B.
4/798.3.
²
See various reports, Supt. to P.U.S., in ibid., e.g.,
15 August 1871, 13 September 1871, 1 February 1872 (strait
jackets and gags used), 7 August 1872 (bread and water
for a week ordered).
³
R.C.P.C. 1873-4, q.7559ff, 18 September 1873.
The unsuitable institutions chosen, first at Newcastle, then the dank stone barracks on Cockatoo Island that once housed the convicts who hewed out the Fitzroy dock, only made classification more difficult, and only emphasised the separation of the inmates from the rest of society. It might have been possible to remedy the carelessness of the magistrates with a more satisfactory building, but government parsimony would provide no more. To make matters worse for the girls, the first two superintendents were disastrous men, quite unable, as the girls quickly discovered, to control their charges. If their angry spirits burst out in scenes fit to shock staid opinion, was it any wonder, in that stone and iron building, with incompetent control, penny-pinching administration, and intriguing back-biting staff?

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The 'barrack' legend was being formed. The scandals at Newcastle and Biloela were followed by accounts from sharp reporters of life at the Randwick asylum. The critics of institutional care were provided with the doctrinal tools after the visit of Florence and Rosamond Hill and the publication of the reports of the Royal Commission on Public Charities chaired by Windeyer. The Hill sisters spoke of

...the home influences essential to the wholesome training of girls, the very lack of which had brought
Windeyer explicitly reflected their views in the Report. He castigated the Biloela site, the management, the measure of corporal punishment, the lack of religious instruction, the want of clear definitions of the children to be dealt with, and the lack of a boys' reformatory. The scathing report reached passages of eloquence as this amateur social reformer thundered against 'grated iron doors, with massive locks and heavy bolts; instead of windows, grated apertures high in the blank walls, allowing no outlook on the scene beyond'.

The reformers' arguments made much of this evil setting. Why re-create in the barracks the self-same degrading, dulling environment from which it was intended to rescue these children? It was being found that institutions, as much or more than the profligacy of Sussex Street, could destroy children. Windeyer and the Hills believed true virtue was inherent in the community. The children from the 'barracks' should be 'boarded out', especially to worthy families of ordinary people in country districts. Normal participation in community life at school, church, and work could be the basis of reformation and re-entry into the community. It was persuasive doctrine that convinced many. It weakened

the veneration given to Randwick and the Vernon. The community was being asked to reconsider the worthiness of institutional and regulative care for destitute children. The criticism and re-assessment was to culminate in an entirely new style of child care in 1881. Meanwhile at the end of 1875, 1,492 children were living in the two orphan schools, the Randwick Asylum, the industrial schools, the girls reformatory, and the Benevolent Asylum. Excluding the last, this was costing the government £21,383, while private contributions totalled only £3,384 (to the Destitute Children's Asylum).¹

¹ S.R. 1875, p.9.
CHAPTER 4

THE SICK POOR, 1850-75:
COLONIAL PRACTICE IN AN AMATEUR AGE

The general concern for the welfare of the sick poor, simple, rough and humane, expressed in the first annual report of the Parramatta District Hospital, was characteristic of the 1850s.

Amongst the poorer population, cases of disease will inevitably occur; and as the unfortunate sufferers have not the means of purchasing medicines, the result would be deplorable if the public did not provide some means to alleviate the pain of the sick, and shelter them from the inclemencies of the weather.¹

It was given more precise forms during the next 20 years. Admissions doubled between 1858 and 1875, a rate of increase which was faster than that of the population of the colony. In absolute terms this represented a doubling or more of the number of beds available and the establishment of about 20 new hospitals.

By 1875 the technical capacity of the hospitals to provide, not merely a refuge of last resort, but a place of healing and recovery, was greatly improved. The 'sanitary idea', then nursing, followed by Listerian antiseptic doctrine came to the colony. To some the contrast between existing conditions and the best English practice was intolerable. Humanity demanded improvement. The Sydney Infirmary in particular was the

¹ S.M.H. 24 January 1850.
subject, over ten years or more, of sustained criticism and investigation. The age of almost amateur medicine for the sick poor was coming to a close. The beginnings of reform were discernible.

1. **Care for the sick poor in Sydney, 1850-66**

By contrast with London, or even Melbourne, the evidence of what was happening in Sydney is meagre.¹ The annual report of the Sydney Infirmary for 1855 stated that the hospital had 150 beds, and had treated 1,226 indoor patients and another 907 at the Dispensary during the year. The income of the institution had been £5,912 and its expenditure £5,418.² English medical practice as applied in the colony ensured the exclusion of certain types of sickness from the benefits of the hospitals, especially at the Sydney Infirmary. In the country centres it was far less easy to be exclusive about the types of cases that were admitted. The Infirmary in Sydney refused to admit pregnant women, as the Benevolent Society ascertained finally in 1858.³ The mentally deranged were provided for by the government in the

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¹ No minute books or files have survived from the Sydney Hospital. There is a considerable amount of evidence in certain C.S.I.L. files, which will be referred to below. J.F. Watson, op. cit., is consistent with these, and contains virtually eye-witness narrative in its later chapters.

² S.M.H. 13 February 1856.

³ See above p.70.
lunatic asylums at Tarban Creek and Parramatta. As often as not, people suffering from such illnesses with associated medical symptoms were admitted to the Infirmary and then committed, at its request, to the lunatic asylums.\(^1\) The Infirmary was unhappy, as were all the hospitals, at receiving chronic cases, for example 'inveterate ulcers of the legs'.\(^2\) These were thought to be proper cases for the Benevolent Asylum, or after 1862, the Government Asylums for the Infirm and Destitute. To receive these cases into the hospitals would mean tying up beds for long periods, and being involved in the tedium of caring for incontinent patients who were often also unwilling to submit to the discipline of the hospital. Such cases were still brought to the Infirmary and to the country hospitals. Where else could the police take derelict, vermin-covered drunkards in the last stages of decay, especially when such people were living in a cycle that included the government asylums until they felt strong enough to walk out, then become drunk and derelict once

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\(^1\) E.g. Sec., Sydney Infirmary to Col. Sec., petitioning for committal of Timothy Donovan from Infirmary to Lunatic Asylum; certified by Drs Alleyne & Mackellar. April 1859. C.S.I.L. 59/1423.

\(^2\) The phrase is from the 'Recommendation for a Patient' presented as evidence to the R.C.P.C. 1873-4, Appendix B3. The Benevolent Society's A.R. for 1847 explained: 'It is true, that in the City of Sydney, there is an Institute for the sick poor, but that Society has not the means of receiving all cases that call for relief. The Benevolent Society, accordingly, are under necessity of providing for all cases of a chronic nature....'
more, producing yet another collapse in their health?\(^1\) Sometimes the country hospitals took drastic action. The Queanbeyan Hospital simply refused to admit such chronic cases early in 1860, and defied the government in so doing.\(^2\) So did the Yass Hospital.\(^3\) The Maitland Hospital authorities despatched chronic cases to Liverpool unannounced, in 1863-4, much to the agitation of the Board of the Asylums.\(^4\) Another tactic, of committing these people to gaol, preferably Darlinghurst, was greeted critically by government circulars in 1864-6.\(^5\) The upshot was, as we have seen, a steady increase in the numbers being admitted to the Asylums for the Infirm and Destitute, and an increase in the proportion of those at those asylums, whose conditions required some form of medical treatment.

\(^1\) Cf. Resident Surgeon, Sydney Infirmary to President of the Hospital Board, 29 June 1866, in 'Sydney Infirmary: Correspondence' V. & P. 1866, vol.4, pp.23-6.
\(^2\) The correspondence is in V. & P. 1861-2, vol.1, p.989ff.
\(^3\) Ibid., p.996.
\(^5\) See Parkes' minute of 14 February 1866 on C.S.I.L. 66/650, with 66/977, expressing anger and disgust at the practice.
Other groups for whom the hospitals were unwilling to accept responsibility were children and infectious cases. The former, it was believed, had a far better chance of recovery out of hospital. Infectious cases imported danger into settings where the condition could destroy all in a few days. The solution adopted by the Maitland Hospital, of building a 'fever ward', was unusual for the 1860s. In the 1880s the Coast Hospital was to be established to serve Sydney for this purpose. Till then typhoid cases were treated at home; consumptive and cancer cases were often admitted to the Government Asylums, especially if they were in the later stages of these diseases. They were not treated as infectious 'fevers' in the same class as typhus, typhoid, scarlatina and erysipelas.

The hospitals of the colony sought to exclude those cases which were beyond their capacity. But they were still left a wide range of acute cases, often surgical, to deal with. There is no evidence to show that, as yet, the further complicating factor of medical education had entered into the process of selecting those who were admitted for treatment, as it had done in England.

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3 Abel Smith, *The Hospitals*, chs.2-3, shows this to have been an important factor affecting the policy of public hospitals in London in the nineteenth century. 'As hospitals came to admit more acute sick, the work of the outpatient departments acquired a new importance....The doctors wanted acutely sick patients with interesting diseases for teaching purposes!' P.39.
Since facilities were so limited, to turn people away was to refuse them treatment absolutely. The alternative of a Poor Law Infirmary scarcely existed.

At the Sydney Infirmary, there were shifts in the financial criteria for admission. Evidence given to the Royal Commission on Public Charities in 1873-4 showed that for many years the hospital's administration had been exploiting the stated government responsibility for sick paupers. The original assumption that only destitute sick, with no other means of help, would be admitted on government order, had been brushed aside over 20 years. Certificates that applicants did not possess the means to pay for their treatment were regularly signed by the Infirmary officials and forwarded to the Colonial Secretary's Office. Since this office exercised virtually no scrutiny over these recommendations, which were readily available, not only to the Infirmary officials, but also to respectable citizens, the hospital rapidly came to rely on this system to pay for the care of many of its patients.¹ It is this practice which helps, along with growing population, in explaining the increase in government payments to hospitals from approximately £7,500 in 1858 to over £18,000 in 1875.²

Further developments in the nature of the admissions can be detected: many employers found it convenient to

¹ R.C.P.C. 1873-4, evidence 14 May 1873, q.1837 (Dr Halkett) and Appendix B3.
² Table 3 (Hospital Income).
subscribe to the Infirmary and arrange for the accommodation of their employees in times of accident and illness.\(^1\) A sensible exploitation of the rules perhaps, but a challenge to the concept of the hospital as a charitable institution. More was to be heard of this problem of 'imposition' or 'hospital abuse' in the coming years. After the act of 1873 friendly societies began to make a positive appearance in Sydney.\(^2\) One of the most typical ways in which these societies operated was to provide medical services on a co-operative basis. They arranged this by paying doctors fees according to the number of members in the society. He then was available to the members for consultation without further charge. They also subscribed to the Infirmary in order to gain the right of admission to it for their members. These practices were also to become controversial in later years.

What sort of care was made available to those who did gain admission? The general condition of the Infirmary in the 1850s has already been indicated in chapter one. St Vincent's Hospital was established in 1855-6 by the Sisters of Charity.\(^3\) It too was a free hospital, and in concept, intended for persons of all religious persuasions. The model on which it was based was the hospital conducted under the Order's foundress,

\(^1\) R.C.P.C. 1873-4, evidence 26 May 1873, q.4115 (Dr S. Moon); 5 May 1873, q.455 (Blackstone).

\(^2\) 37 Vic., no.4.

\(^3\) S.M.H. 4 December 1855; T.L. Suttor, op. cit., p.158.
M. Aikenhead, in Dublin. It was financed by public subscriptions, and received support from Archdeacon McEncroe, J.H. Plunkett and Sir Charles Nicholson in particular. Because of its religious affiliations it never became the recipient of government subsidy, although from time to time government order patients were sent there. Naturally the local people from Paddington and Darlinghurst found free medical care there. Servicemen from the naval station and the Victoria Barracks were also sent there. This must have been an important support for the hospital. Basically it grew as a hospital for the poorer members of the Roman Catholic community of Sydney. It had four wards, probably with 16 beds, in 1858.\textsuperscript{1} By 1873 there were 36 beds.\textsuperscript{2} There is almost no information available on the internal functioning of the hospital apart from the occasional statements of numbers in the \textit{Statistical Register}.\textsuperscript{3}

The focus of care for the sick poor in Sydney remained on the Sydney Infirmary and Dispensary. Like other public hospitals it faced recurrent problems of finance, control and skills. As a charity, the hospital relied on public subscriptions. Annual meetings were poorly attended in the 1850s and 1860s. Subscription

\textsuperscript{1} Freeman's Journal 16 July 1858.
\textsuperscript{2} R.C.P.C. 1873-4, p.106 (Appendix to evidence of E.G. Ward).
\textsuperscript{3} The furore over Sister de Lacey's departure in 1859 is discussed in Suttor, op. cit., pp.188-92.
lists did not keep pace with the expanding number of patients. Costs rose, if the steadily rising charge for maintenance of government patients is a safe guide and not a disguised shift of responsibility. Under these circumstances, recourse to government subsidy to make up the gap in finances was regular and heavy.

Finance from the government was also gained to improve the facilities of the hospital: a bath house in 1850, an operating theatre in 1855, the southern wing with 73 beds in 1858, a new dispensary building in 1862, the Nightingale Wing for nurses in 1868. Most of the capital cost of these improvements was met by the colonial treasury.

The central wing of the hospital remained unaltered. It was an old and dirty building getting progressively more difficult to keep clean, to ventilate and to protect from the dangers of sewerage. The David Gibson case in 1866 vividly presented to Henry Parkes the

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1 Tables 3 and 4.
4 E.g. Hon. Sec., Sydney Infirmary to Col. Sec. 17 October 1864, informing him that the expense of erecting the new offices and southern wing had exceeded the vote by £5,000 and asking for this amount to be placed on the 1865 estimates. C.S.I.L. 64/5661.
inefficiencies of this infirmary for the sick poor.¹
This young sailor, taken into the Infirmary from his ship, was found by Edward Flood and then by Henry Parkes, to be 'in a very filthy state and swarming with vermin'.²
The next day he died. The resident surgeon, Dr Houston, explained that it was almost impossible to keep no.1 ward clean. All the destitute and incurable old men brought in by the police were put in this ward, and being unwilling to go to the asylum, there they stayed, rarely washed and perhaps dying. The Honorary Surgeons criticised the lack of efficient nursing. All that was provided was the rough treatment of old women.³ Some of the Board of Directors made charges as to the inefficiency of the House Committee: poor book-keeping, drunkenness unchecked, free rationing for improper periods, poor nursing, wasted stores, improper practices in the relations among patients, and with the servants, and a lack of regular system.⁴ Parkes, appalled at what he had

¹ Most of the papers were published in V. & P. 1866, vol.4, p.23ff. A fuller collection is at C.S.I.L. 66/4126.
² Col. Sec. to President, Sydney Infirmary, 29 June 1866, ibid.
³ Resident Surgeon to President, Sydney Infirmary, 29 June 1866, ibid.
⁴ 17 August 1866, ibid.
seen and heard, determined that a Royal Commission be appointed to investigate the hospital. ¹

At this point, though the government desired to inform itself as to the efficiency and skills of the hospital in fulfilling its charitable functions, the confusion over its control re-appeared. The Board of the hospital refused to allow such 'interference on the part of the government and resolved to decline furnishing the Commission...with the documents demanded, and...to prohibit any of the servants of the Institution from appearing before the Commission'. ² Being a charity, and having no established position of subordination vis a vis the government, the Board won the battle for the time being, and avoided this inquiry. Martin, as Attorney-General, expressed regret at their attitude but found no point of law on which to coerce them. ³ This refusal illustrated once again the value placed on the work of autonomous public societies by mid Victorian society. Government officials were to become increasingly critical of this lack of public accountability, which they did not hesitate to call irresponsibility.

² Hon. Sec., Sydney Infirmary to Col. Sec., 24 August 1866, ibid.
³ 10 September 1866, ibid. See below, p.161, for the government's further, legislative, action.
2. **Interlude: country hospitals, 1850-75**

Country hospitals were emerging from the vestiges of the convict system or from generalized local benevolence, often given focus by the arrival of a doctor or two in a centre. The Tamworth Benevolent Society considered a new site and building in August 1854. The Maitland Hospital board sought a grant of £250 from the government for a fever ward in July 1857: their original buildings had been a military hospital. Plans were being laid at Deniliquin in 1858, with the support of the largest local landowner, Peter Stuckey (who was by no means persona grata with other squatters of the district), for the erection of a two storied brick building for the 'Deniliquin Working Men's Hospital'. Steadily the numbers in these little hospitals grew, and their admissions rose. 1,193 were listed in 1858. This had more than doubled to 2,793 by 1875. Income rose from almost £14,000 to just over £21,000 in the same period. These 'hospitals' were still scarcely better than refuges for the poor. There was no pretence of special instrumentation or elaborate facilities for indigent and itinerant sick and wounded.

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1 S.M.H. 9 August 1854.
2 Secretary, Maitland Hospital to Col. Sec., 23 July 1857, C.S.I.L. 57/3071 with 57/3128.
4 Table 3 and Statistical Registers.
The recommendations of Florence Nightingale found little response in country districts, where expenditure on such social capital items was limited to the bare minimum.¹

The Inspector of Public Charities provided a certain stimulus to the work of the country hospitals in his first two or three years of office. He found no provision available for women at the Newcastle Hospital.² At Maitland the committee he thought was 'energetic and practical'. The building, of lofty wards with a good bath and well stocked dispensary, was able to accommodate 60 patients.³ The Bathurst Hospital was 'neglected and dilapidated' at his visit in September 1871.⁴ The Goulburn Hospital's furniture and bedding were old and worn. There did not appear to be an honorary attached to the hospital: three doctors received 2 guineas a week each to serve the 20 beds.⁵ At Windsor the hospital of the Hawkesbury Benevolent Society was also showing signs of neglect and wear.⁶ The Inspector even managed to

¹ Her impact on the Sydney Infirmary is discussed in the next section. There is no doubt that her fame had spread to the colony.
² Inspector of Public Charities (King) to Col. Sec. 31 January 1870, C.S.I.L. 70/949 in S.B. 4/810.2. The creation of the office of Inspector of Public Charities is discussed in the next section.
³ 14 April 1870, 70/3201, ibid.
⁴ 12 September 1871, 71/6915, ibid.
⁵ 12 October 1871, 71/8626, ibid.
⁶ 71/7729, encl. to 72/3921, ibid.
visit the gold and grazing centre of Braidwood, where he found a hospital of 13 beds, and two doctors receiving £65 each for attendance (of which he disapproved). At his remark that the hospital at Yass was 'old and out of repair' the Under Secretary minuted 'attention to be invited'. At Bathurst in April 1872 he found that 'the principal ward [is]...now a fine room capable of containing 15...[but] the walls are in a very dirty, dingy state which gives the ward a very uncomfortable appearance'. At Orange, by contrast, the hospital was 'pleasantly and healthily situated'. Its wards were clean and the inmates comfortable. It was clear to King that the Committee took a great interest in the institution, which had beds for 12.

Conditions need not be quite so bad after all. The country centres possessing hospitals grew in numbers, as did their capacity. Their efficiency remained questionable as they baked in the heat of inland summers and occasionally decayed for lack of support. Overall the figures for annual expenditure suggest that country districts, with about half the colony's population, were the venue for about 50 per cent of the annual expenditure of hospital boards. This was

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1 20 October 1871, 71/7927, ibid.
2 16 November 1871, 71/8609, ibid.
3 16 April 1872, 72/2933, ibid.
4 16 April 1872, 72/2931, ibid.
a limited achievement, however, when this expenditure was distributed among them. It was a persistent problem for the country hospitals that on the one hand local enthusiasm was eager to establish such socially useful and increasingly prestigious institutions, but on the other little able to sustain staff and facilities at more than a mediocre level. It was all too easy to rely on the local member of parliament to extort an occasional special grant from the government. These grants were distributed with only a vague concern for rational, planned hospital provision, and much more with an eye to the traditional canons of pork-barrel politics.

There is little more to say about country hospitals, especially in this first period of our study. As centres of local patriotism they undoubtedly grew in prestige. Yet their facilities remained restricted and relatively primitive. They were all the community could afford in its frontier districts.

3. The beginnings of reform: 1866-75

The furore over the David Gibson case showed the directors of the Sydney Infirmary that providing for the sick poor required more than facilities such as beds and food. Elementary steps were taken immediately to discipline the staff and improve the standards of accounting and administration. The honoraries expressed the hope that the government would assist the hospital
in providing supervising nurses. Here were the first breezes of modernisation, and of attempts at scientific medical treatment. The hospital was to undergo that typical process of specialisation common to hospitals in the western world in the last 30 years of the nineteenth century and beyond. Standards of treatment took on precision, recovery rates became hopeful, hospitals became places of cure rather than death.

As an immediate result of the Infirmary board's repudiation of the right of a Royal Commission to investigate its activities, Parkes introduced a bill in October 1866 - i.e. within a month of their final refusal - 'for the inspection of hospitals and other institutions' wholly or in part supported by grants from the public revenue. The act permitted the appointment of an 'Inspector of Public Charities' who might conduct inquiries into the management of such institutions at the direction of the Colonial Secretary. Conceived as an immediate riposte to the Sydney Infirmary, the act was an important assertion of principle, namely, that the government, by virtue of its large support of such institutions, was entitled to exercise a regular scrutiny of their affairs. The boards of these public societies were now to be accountable, not only to their subscribers,

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1 Hon. Surgeons, Sydney Infirmary to Col. Sec. 10 July 1866, V. & P. 1866, vol.4, pp.23-4; Deputation, Sydney Infirmary to Col. Sec. re improvements, asking for £6,000, S.M.H. 30 August 1867.
2 30 Vic., no.19.
but also in some measure to the government on behalf of the community.

Parkes, the originator of the act, never envisaged that the inspector should develop executive control over these institutions. That was the exercise of a political function to be reserved to the government, and to politicians. Even the attempts of the second (Frederic King) and third (Hugh Robison) inspectors to develop critical traditions through their annual reports was looked on with great suspicion by Parkes.¹ In 1886 he argued in the Legislative Assembly that

...it was never contemplated by either the framers of the act or the Parliament that passed it that this officer should do more than see that the purpose of the institutions to which the money was granted was strictly carried out. It was never intended that he should interfere, make recommendations, or suggest plans, but he was an executive officer appointed under an act of Parliament for one class of duties, which were distinctly stated in the act itself....His duties are to see that the grants from the public Treasury are properly applied, to see that the regulations of the hospital...are strictly carried out. There his duties stop....²

¹ Parkes made some contemptuous remarks of Frederic King in the supply debate 22 January 1873 (S.M.H. 24th), which drew a defence from the Inspector of Public Charities to the P.U.S. 4 February 1873, C.S.I.L. 73/1003 in S.B. 4/810.2.
² N.S.W. P.D. vol.21, p.3864, 6 August 1886.
R.C. Walker was appointed Inspector of Public Charities at £500 p.a. in April 1868. His first and only report contained long descriptions, with little critical comment, of most of the colony's charitable institutions. Frederic King, already Secretary to the Board of the Government Asylums for the Infirm and Destitute was appointed to succeed him in November 1869, being paid only £100 for the additional duties. It was at his initiative that a circular was sent to all Benches of Magistrates seeking reports on institutions in their districts. Like Walker, he produced a factual annual report for 1870, but this was unacceptable to the Colonial Secretary, who had it revised, and even then refused to have it laid before Parliament.

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1 He was given the job as a consolation for failing to gain appointment as Parliamentary Librarian. He became head of the Public Library a year later. His brother was Critchett Walker, later to be P.U.S. Other applicants in 1868 included George Wise, secretary of the Destitute Children's Asylum etc. R.C. Walker to Col. Sec., 11 April 1868, attached to C.S.M. 16631.


3 C.S.M. 16833.


5 There is a copy dated 31 October 1871, in C.S.I.L. S.B. 'Records of Public Charities Commission, 1873-74'. 4/1083-4. See also his defence, as cited above, of 4 February 1873. He had been 'cautioned not to make vexatious reports as to cleanliness, the presence of vermin, and other matters of detail'.
While Walker and then King sought to give meaning to their duties, Parkes himself initiated a much more spectacular endeavour on behalf of the Infirmary. Taking the hint from the letter of the Honorary Surgeons, he contacted Florence Nightingale in 1868 about providing trained nurses of the type made so famous by her work in the Crimea and at St Thomas' Hospital. She forwarded a plan of nursing and selected a 'Lady Superintendent' (as the Infirmary authorities wished to call her) together with five nursing 'sisters'. Parkes agreed to supply government funds for their salaries, and to provide new quarters. Lucy Osburn and her companions arrived later in 1868. Perhaps their apprehensive, critical English eyes discovered what they wanted to see, but Lucy Osburn's narrative to Florence Nightingale on the existing regime is damning enough. It shows the ancien régime of hospital charity

...dirty frowsy old women, slatternly untidy young ones all greasy with their hair down their backs with ragged stuff dresses that required no washing. The doctors habitually stamped and raved at them. In the wards the patients called Betsy and Polly to do the most menial work for them...the noise and pranks in the wards were too dreadful; I was several weeks in understanding it all - weeks simply amazed! Most carefully I weeded out the incorrigible ones, dismissed with my blessing and often with a present....

1 Z. Cope, *Six Disciples of Florence Nightingale*, London, 1961, p.16. Correspondence from Lucy Osburn to Henry Parkes is in the Parkes Correspondence: e.g. on their arrival, A926, p.266ff; during the R.C.P.C. 1873-4, p.288ff. The official negotiations on the appointment of nurses to Sydney Infirmary are recorded in C.S.I.L. S.B. 'Nurses, Sydney Hospital, 1866-68', 4/768.2.
She received strong support from Parkes, both in office and out. She also gained support from some of the Board. She became the focus for the improvers even if their belief in the 'sanitary idea' was to prove a commitment to a grand simplified illusion that itself became a barrier to further, scientific, change.

Mostly the established authorities of the hospital sought to avoid change, for all their good will with regard to the sick poor. Still, by slow degrees an assault on dirt and bugs was undertaken, nursing standards were raised, and dietary scales revised to replace grog with food (an odd commentary on the 'Rum Hospital'). It is to be noted that Miss Osburn's five companions were not themselves all marvels of devotion and propriety. It was not long before Miss Osburn was on her own, training a generation of Australians, drawn from a better social class than the English women. With them the nursing revolution was confirmed.

In the flush of enthusiasm and revulsion that came with the attempted assassination of Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh (1868) it was proposed to establish a memorial hospital to mark the Duke's recovery and the loyalty of the citizens of New South Wales. Funds were raised and negotiations opened with the Sydney Infirmary. It seemed a golden opportunity to rebuild at Macquarie Street.

1 M.P. Susman, 'Lucy Osburn and her five Nightingale nurses'. M.J.A. 1 May 1965.
2 20 March 1868: Prince Alfred Hospital Gazette, 26 April 1918, p.18, report of public meeting.
But the projectors met the hostility of the Parkes-Martin administration. Because the government continued to regard the institution as a public charity, they refused to grant the land on which the hospital was sited, as the projectors of the new fund asked. Deas Thomson's arguments that the per capita payments were for services rendered, that a promise was made in 1848, that it would cost the government more if they ran the institution themselves were all met with Martin's insistence that the Infirmary was both public and insubstantial. The land was to remain in government hands as a surety for the Infirmary's fulfillment of its responsibilities, and as a symbol of the Martin-Parkes Cabinet's distrust of the Board.

It was a critical decision. Certainly those who resisted patching the old central building had a strong case, despite the recommendations of the 1870 Select Committee which arose out of these negotiations. By divorcing the Prince Alfred Memorial fund from the Sydney Infirmary the community and government were to become committed to a second general hospital. The two institutions were to compete for funds and support with

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2. President, Sydney Infirmary to Col. Sec., 1 October 1868, ibid., pp.469-70.
3. 3 October 1868, ibid., pp.471-2.
little thought for the needs of the community. Perhaps a hospital built in the early 1870s might have had a better chance of being rebuilt about a generation later, as the Royal Melbourne Hospital was.¹

We shall meet the promoters of the Prince Alfred memorial again. The subscribers to the fund represent an early example of the spreading awareness of the social importance of hospitals. The Nightingale propaganda was beginning to have its effect in the colony. More doctors returned from overseas, full of the new techniques and hopes of introducing them in Sydney. Medical care began to be a matter, not merely of charity for the broken dregs of the community, but one of significant social utility. Consequently there was a rising public interest and an associated increase in the respectability of hospitals as charitable institutions.

As we have seen, Parkes was suspicious of the efficiency of the Sydney Infirmary. He repeated his criticisms in the Supply debate in January 1873, as Chief Secretary.² Others were even angrier at the state of the institution. Captain Onslow described to the members his disgust at finding the walls of the wards 'overrun with vermin', and how he found men employed who did nothing, wardsmen who got drunk, or became violent

¹ But on the other hand, the long standing desire of the government to gain possession of the site for an enlarged parliament house might have been made much more difficult of fulfillment. Such are the agonies of social policy!
² Empire 23 January 1873. (report of debate).
towards the nurses. He proposed to move for the appointment of a Select Committee. Others took up the cry: Raphael, that angry critic of established power in Sydney, claimed the Nightingale wing was a scandal, and called for first class medical gentlemen to be appointed. He wanted a Royal Commission. Parkes agreed. His friend Richard Windeyer was appointed as chairman, together with six others.¹

The letter of instruction to the commission indicated just how widely Parkes wished them to range. It showed, too, the progress of the doctrines of 'modern hospital management'. The commission would obviously have to begin with the Infirmary, especially when they were exhorted

...to keep in view the principles of modern hospital management which have been of late years accepted by those who have devoted their attention most beneficially to this object in England. The object of the Government is to place this, the principal hospital of the Colony, under the most improved system of management.²

The commission was intended to provide Parkes with the detailed assessment he was unable to make himself, and which he believed the Inspector of Public Charities incapable of producing. Then legislative and administrative action could be taken. As was to be expected, the commission's first report provided

² P.U.S. to members of commission 17 April 1873, ibid.
overwhelming confirmation that the criticisms of 1866 still applied, and that above all, the building in Macquarie Street should be replaced. The report condemned the swarms of bugs, widespread hospitalism (pyaemia), erysipelas and eye diseases, all apparently propagated by the hospital building itself. They were caustic about the lavatories, about the sewer running under the main building, about rats gnawing corpses in the dead house, about the kitchen so ill provided with appliances. 'The retention of this old, infected and worn out building for a moment longer than is absolutely necessary is altogether inexpedient'.

If this was their comment on the site, their remarks on other aspects of the efficiency of the institution were equally scathing. The board of 27 members was volatile and ignorant, as well as being unworkably large. The conflicts of control between manager and nurses could be disastrous; food was poor, and the method of supplying it to the wards badly organised. The house steward, dispensary and clothing storage, were all criticised.

Turning from personnel and services to finance and control, the Commission drew attention to the absence of government members on the Board, as well as to the systematic exploitation of the government orders by the hospital's admission system.

The remedy...is to abolish the system of admission on the orders of subscribers, and throw open the

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1 Ibid., First Report, p.68.
hospital to all really indigent persons requiring treatment for accidents and acute cases. The object then set before the public mind would be the duty of helping to support the Charity for its own sake, and not the narrower aim of getting something out of it in return.¹

Consistent with their general disapproval of pauperism, they claimed that the outpatient and dispensary systems tended only towards systematic pauperisation. Instead they urged a self supporting dispensary based on 1/- subscriptions.² Characteristic of the attitudes of the period, however, the Charities Commission failed to face the problem of people who preferred to be treated in the Infirmary, despite its dangers, than at home because, though not paupers, they could not afford the cost of treatment and believed the Infirmary would provide a better environment. This category was growing. Soon the pressure from them was to transform the whole discussion. When so many ordinary respectable working men and even wives of the best people in the community sought medical care in a charitable institution originally founded for the care of the sick poor, then the definitions and assumptions upon which the service had been provided cried out for re-examination.

Putting it another way, awareness of new standards of medical care was only just dawning. The criticisms of the Windeyer commission were the criticisms of educated,

¹ Ibid., p.100.
² Ibid., p.93.
liberal minded laymen, businessmen and lawyers. There was little really scientific in what they had to say. Their remarks were based on the medical theories of the previous generation, of Chadwick and Nightingale, rather than of Simon or Lister. But the stimulus they gave to public awareness of the needs of the hospital was significant because of the eminence of the commission, the readability of its report and its whole-hearted acceptance of the 'sanitary principle' and the corollary that the Infirmary was inadequate to the needs of the community. Already dated by the newest practice they might have been, but their report was an important piece of public education that carried the process of improved hospital standards forward. Despite the fact that the government did little immediately - largely because Parkes was unwilling to make any precipitate move in a field where opposing interests were powerful and deeply entrenched - the commission's wholesale condemnation, re-iterated by the reports of the third Inspector of Public Charities, of the Infirmary building became the datum on which the support of the Parkes-Robertson ministry of 1878-83 for plans for substantial rebuilding was based.

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1 The contrasts between the passionately held dogmas of Nightingale and Chadwick and the more scientifically valid position of Lister, Simon and others is drawn explicitly by R. Lambert, op. cit., pp.267-9.
CHAPTER 5

CHANGING STANDARDS OF MEDICAL CARE:

THE SICK POOR, 1875-1900

In 1875 the Statistical Register showed 2,773 patients admitted to city and suburban hospitals, and another 2,793 in country districts. By 1900 the figures were 14,713 and 13,978.\(^1\) As proportions of the population,\(^2\) admissions in 1875 were at the rate of approximately 1 in 100 of the colony and 1 in 66 in Sydney. By 1900 the ratios had risen to 1 in 50 and 1 in 35. That is, along with the growth of the population, there were twice as many people using the hospitals than had been the case 25 years before. By 1900 there were available in Sydney not only two large and recently built general hospitals, but a series of cottage hospitals in the suburbs, accommodation for chronic cases in the government asylums, accommodation for general, convalescent, fever and venereal cases at the Coast Hospital, an eye hospital, a home for consumptives, two convalescent hospitals, a children's hospital, an increasing number of lying-in hospitals and a series of Roman Catholic institutions: total bed capacity was listed as 3,351. In the country districts, where in 1875 there were 37 hospitals, by 1900 there were 102. Demand and provision had both extended substantially.

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1 Table 4.
2 Tables 1 and 2.
There was a change in outlook setting in towards the sick poor. Sickness, much more than poverty, was by 1900 the criterion by which eligibility for medical aid was decided. Many more people availed themselves of the services the hospitals provided, not because there were many more poor in 1900, but because the medical treatment available was better and cheaper than that available anywhere else.

There was also an increased involvement on the part of the government in the provision of these medical services. The general assumptions about charitable duty towards the sick poor did not collapse. It was rather that the scale of finance involved required government aid. Hospitals could not be built without large capital grants from the colonial treasury. The volume of demand and some immediate exigencies in the 1880s pushed the government into direct participation in the work of caring for the sick poor: at the Coast Hospital and in the asylums for the infirm and destitute. It was a shift in practice which was to prepare the way for a large scale debate on the government's role in community medical services just before the Great War.

1. **Arguments about entitlement**

With the rise in demand for hospital services, both as a result of the growth in the population and as a product of the more effective services provided there, the question of entitlement became acute. Could this extending group of people expect to receive medical aid from the public hospitals as a charity? There was the 'stigma of
pauperism' about which much was written in the 1870s. Perhaps some scheme could be evolved which would allow people to enter the hospitals without this stigma being thrust upon them. Or perhaps the relative attractiveness of the hospitals' facilities would erase the stigma and force a completely different approach to the part the patient played in hospital finances. Thus the Inspector of Public Charities suggested in 1877 and 1878 that a payment of a shilling a day be asked of patients in order to inculcate 'feelings of self reliance and self respect by paying...in part for the benefits received'. Such a proposal was never effectively introduced as a compulsory requirement in this period. The public hospitals remained charities. But increasingly they gained contributions voluntarily given by patients able to do so.

On the other side of the coin were the government order patients, those destitute persons unable to gain a subscriber's order or arrange admission in any other way, who were treated at government expense. In all the hospitals other than Sydney (and Prince Alfred when it was opened), the admission of such patients was still based on the annual government subsidies. The two general hospitals were paid per patient as well as receiving subsidies. Occasionally the hospital authorities objected to the types of cases introduced, especially by the police. There was for example a brief flurry at Parramatta in 1879: the hospital secretary complained

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Police are in the habit of bringing to this institution persons they find lying about, in a destitute and apparently helpless condition, proper subjects for reception into one of the Government Benevolent Institutions (one of which is not far from the Police Office) but not suitable for admission into an institution which is simply curative...\(^1\)

The fact of the matter was of course that dirty, vermin ridden old men were difficult patients, disturbing to a hospital's good name, expensive to care for and distasteful to the staff. All the more so in Parramatta, where alternative facilities appeared to be available at the other end of town. The affair ended with police continuing to bring such people to the hospital, strengthened by a minute from the Colonial Secretary, but probably exercising more tact (especially with the matron, who appeared to be a stickler for the rules who treated the police with little more than contempt). The defence of his men by the Inspector General of Police pointed the real moral of these cases. In bringing them to the hospitals...

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\(^1\) Secretary, Parramatta Hospital to Col. Sec., 14 March 1879; C.S.I.L. 79/2001 encl. to 79/2234 in S.B. 'Admission of aged and destitute persons from country districts into Government Asylums, 1864-79'. 4/809.1.
...the constables were only exercising ordinary humanity and prudence...they could not allow poor suffering creatures to be down in the streets, perhaps to die there, and certainly the floor of a cell is no place to take them to. 1

Another dispute broke out in 1891, again with Parramatta Hospital. As a result, the Medical Adviser to the Government produced a much clearer definition of the terms under which hospitals were to receive the subsidy.

1 Inspector General of Police, minute on ibid. Some examples of the cases involved were:-

George Fitzgerald, 23 years of age, found in the street insensible from sunstroke. Carried by Police to the Hospital on 14 March and admitted. Discharged same day.

George Gleney, 78 years of age. Locked up for vagrancy - was seized with cramps in the cell - he was carried to the Hospital. The matron refused to admit him. He was carried back to the Lock up and Dr Rutter sent for at ½ past 10 p.m. he attended and ordered Gleney to be taken to the Hospital at once, which was done. He was then admitted on 9 April 1878 and discharged on 13 April 1878.

These are from two reports submitted by the police, 20 and 31 March 1879; Gleney no.3 of 20; Fitzgerald no.3 of 31, at same location.

A similar stir arose at Sydney Hospital in April 1883, with the same elements of inconvenience, tactlessness and unwanted patients. The subsequent inquiry especially emphasised the noisiness of alcohol patients. But the service had to be provided, if only as a part of the process of regulating and cleansing the city. Committee of Inquiry into certain complaints in the management of Sydney Hospital, Report, V. & P. 1883, vol.2, p.917ff.
It also underlined their responsibility to admit all destitute cases recommended by government officials. ¹

Despite such protests as these, the delirium tremens cases were readily classified and dealt with. What drew increasingly critical comment was the willingness of working-men to apply, and for the public hospitals to admit them, on the basis of a government order for pauper patients. The practice had already been remarked upon before the Windeyer Commission, which however did not make much of it in its report. Robison was much more concerned:

It was not intended or forseen that one of the direct consequences of liberal support from the public revenue to our various Charitable Institutions would be to bring an ever increasing number of our poor into direct and permanent dependence upon government; ... Not only do our Public Charities increase far beyond reasonable bounds, seeing how easy it is in this community to find employment by all really desirous of obtaining it; but the feeling has grown up among a considerable number that self-restraint or provident habits are unnecessary - that to government they have a right to look for provision in sickness or old age - and that on it they may cast the responsibility of maintaining parents, children, or any other helpless members of their family whenever it becomes convenient, and without reference to their own ability to bear such burdens. ²

¹ The papers in this second Parramatta case are at C.S.I.L. 91/14483. A copy of the minute by the M.A.G., 1 December 1891, is in Department of P.H. 'Book of Precedents and Instructions', p.51, State Archives of N.S.W., shelf list no.5852.

He repeatedly urged the hospitals to extract more money from their patients, for they, like their patients, relied too heavily for Robison's taste on the government. In response to this sort of advice Prince Alfred Hospital began with, and Sydney Hospital introduced, a clause in its aims which publicly permitted the practice of soliciting contributions rather than arranging an order for free treatment. It is interesting to note too that the use of the term 'pauper' was dropped at the same time by the Sydney Hospital in favour of 'indigent person'.

But the exploitation of the government orders continued into the 1880s. It finally became too much for the administration, especially as more competent and decisive civil servants were available to advise the government. To C.K. Mackellar, Medical Adviser to the Government, the practice was 'pauperizing the community'. Occasionally the newspapers had space for an editorial taking the same view. It was as if the advances in medical technology were evaporating the great spirit of self

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3 See biographical note below, p.226.
improvement which had brooded over the colony since the mid century.\(^1\) In August 1884 Mackellar, backed by the premier (Stuart), took action. Government orders for admission to the public hospitals were abolished, and all (save emergency cases) who believed themselves eligible for medical treatment at government expenses were now required to present themselves before the Inspector of Public Charities and a Government Medical Officer, at a stated time daily. Not only was the establishment of this admissions office a re-assertion of government control over the people who were to receive treatment at its expense, but it was also a recognition of the changed conditions under which such charity was distributed. Because of the inconvenience of a trip to the admissions office and the questions asked there, especially about the applicants' capacity to pay, many were deterred. Those who were accepted could be classified immediately and despatched to the appropriate institution, among which were the asylums for the aged and destitute and the Coast Hospital, both controlled directly by the government. From this point on talk of the government's role in medical charity 'pauperising' the community largely disappeared from public comment.

What replaced it in the 1890s, after the worst effects of the depression had passed, was a long drawn out argument between the doctors and the friendly societies, and a deliberate attempt to extend the range of social classes contributing to hospital funds.

\(^1\) D.T. 22 September 1883, 7 January 1884; A.M.G. 15 April 1884, vol.3 (1883-4), p.155.
Co-operative arrangements for medical care extended quickly in this decade, and in the process there were efforts to reduce the fees paid to the doctors or to tighten the agreements under which they worked. It was not in this case an argument about the definition of those who were entitled to charity, but about those who were to enjoy an intermediate, protected service instead of being required to pay the full price of private medical aid. It was, too, a struggle by the medical profession to gain independence from the dictation of other groups in the community in the management of its affairs.

The second development, the Hospital Saturday Fund, was successfully inaugurated in Sydney in 1893.¹ The key idea was that the people who would resent being called paupers if they sought free medical aid from the hospitals would be given the opportunity to contribute to their coffers, and so have no compunction when they should need to seek hospital care. Two means of collecting funds were adopted, the annual street collection (ancestor of the modern badge and button days) aimed at halfpennies and sovereigns alike, and the weekly contribution made at factory or shop, often with the assistance of the management (ancestor of the Hospitals Contribution Fund). The first year of collecting yielded £3,400 for the hospitals of Sydney (1895). By 1914 the

¹ An account of the Birmingham scheme appeared in S.M.H. 3 July 1893. A further discussion appeared 14 August 1893, followed by an account of the inaugural meeting in the Town Hall, 15 August, and an editorial, 16 August 1893.
figure had risen to £8,450. As a means of augmenting the income of the hospitals it was useful, even if not of heroic proportions. It never succeeded in becoming a major money earner.

The implication that an occasional coin in a collection box absolved the donor from any further payment for medical aid was resisted vigorously and successfully by the hospitals. The 'industrial fund' was far more controversial. Some claimed that these factory collections reduced other hospital collections. The Fund claimed, on the basis of the industrial collection not only a general right to subscribers' orders for the admission of contributors, but also seats on hospital boards. Since it was workingmen who were making the contributions it was a startling redefinition of the social classes involved as donors of medical charity. The boards of the hospitals resisted the demands of the Fund, largely because, as they argued, the contributions made in this way went nowhere near to covering the costs of the treatment involved. Behind this was their unwillingness to be dictated to by a contributing body or person. It was only the government which was able to lay down conditions about the treatment of patients

2. F. Grimley to S.M.H. 8 February 1895.
3. S.M.H. 8 April 1897.
4. S.M.H. 14 February 1898 (ed.); Sydney Hospital to Hospital Contribution Fund, 1 March 1898, S.M.H. 2 March 1898.
on the basis of its contributions, and these really only became truly effective towards the end of the century, when the costs of running the hospitals sometimes made it appear that their very existence was in danger. The Hospital Saturday Fund was no solution. Both hospital and patient were to seek other ways of meeting their needs. The whole set of concepts supporting the public hospital and its charitable work was beginning to be found wanting as the twentieth century opened.\(^1\) Not till the coming of the Labour government in 1910 was there any really sustained attempt to solve the related problems of entitlement and financing.

2. **Expanding provision**

Demand was rising. So were the provisions being made for the sick poor, both as cause and effect of that rising demand. The modern hospital was born in England in the 1860s, and we can trace the creation of several such 'new hospitals' in N.S.W. in this period, along with the changing attitudes in the community towards the provision of medical services. This section is devoted to examining some details of this expansion. It was an expansion of charitable effort in a period of economic growth and advancing scientific knowledge.

\(^1\) Further comment on the problem appeared in S.M.H. 4 May 1898 (Fund to hospitals of Sydney); 13 June 1898, ibid.; 2 August 1898 (ed.); A.M.G. 20 August 1898, vol.17 (1898), p.363; S.M.H. 8 October 1898. The colonial experience bore out the contemporary developments of the problem in London; B. Abel-Smith, *The Hospitals*, pp.135-7, p.175.
The two general hospitals in Sydney, one old, one new, were in a class by themselves. Their growth illustrated the problems of raising large scale finance for charitable ventures in the colony, and the associated issue of control when the government became involved. The emergence of specialised provisions - for women, children, convalescents, tuberculous patients, eye complaints - illustrated the varieties of charity as well as the advance of medical knowledge and the dynamism of the community's doctors. The government emerged as an important instrumentality in the provision of medical care during these years, both in the specialised task of providing for the aged, and in the conduct of what was eventually to become a general hospital at Little Bay. In these activities the sheer pressure of rising numbers, the self-generating processes of administrative growth and the occasional intervention of humanitarian feeling can be detected. The growth of the dispensary movement is yet another facet of medical services requiring attention. The friendly society movement was one in which the limits of charity were reached, and where self-help was the dominant motivating force. These two principles were woven inextricably with local pride in developments in the last two areas noticed in this section: the emergence of more country hospitals and the foundation of several in the suburbs of Sydney.

It was an impressive achievement for a community which was at the same time involved in sinking resources in the swift expansion of other public services such as railways and schools, as well as in housing and rural development.
The general hospitals

The Windeyer Commission's report had little effect on the Sydney Infirmary. Its board was as aware as the Commission of most of the weaknesses in the hospital. They argued that until they had unfettered possession of the land upon which the hospital was built, and a large government grant, they could do little to remedy the shortcomings so colourfully revealed by the Commission. Accordingly, pressure was placed on successive governments between 1874 and 1879, and by the more progressive members of the Board (spurred on by Miss Osburn) upon the rest of the directorate.¹

Deputations to the Colonial Secretary were frequent. Successive governments were cautious, however, about the idea of committing the Treasury to a heavy and probably expanding capital outlay. Plans drawn up for

¹ Some evidence of this latter survives in the correspondence between Miss Osburn and Henry Parkes, in P.C. esp. vol.29 (A.899, M.L.) e.g. Osburn to Parkes, 4 March 1874, pp.13-5: ...the election of our House Committee yesterday... was better than we could have hoped. I at last induced one or two of the Board to work the thing up, making out a list of a good committee and getting some 10 or 12 to vote for all the same. By this means we got in 7 of our 9 men and the other 2 are among the least objectionable of their side - Dr McKay and Senior the chemist. Josephson missed... by one and Wise was nowhere.

The main source for the story of the hospital's repeated approaches to the government for funds is in C.S.I.L. S.B. 'Rebuilding of Sydney Infirmary, 1874-79', 4/818.4, and 'Rebuilding of the Sydney Infirmary, 1866-90', 4/896.1.
renovation of the existing building were replaced, after vigorous protests by the doctors culminating in mass resignations, by a public competition for the design of a new hospital, to cost £45,000 and to provide 182 beds. Even so, Robertson was unwilling to make a large grant, while Michael Fitzpatrick (his successor as Colonial Secretary) would only envisage a casualty hospital on the site. Any large public hospital, he is reported to have said, should be able to feed its patients with cabbages grown on the premises - which the Infirmary was manifestly unable to do. The prevarication of his government provoked the angry resignations of the medical staff, perhaps countenanced by the Board, in protest against 'the discreditable state of the hospital' and the 'continued inaction of governments'. When the Herald began to thunder that the government's delay

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1. *Empire* 9 July 1874.
3. The 'Terms and Conditions' for the competition are in C.S.I.L. S.B. 4/818.4.
4. S.M.H. 13 November 1875.
5. Deputation to Col. Sec., 12 February 1878, summarised in President, Sydney Infirmary (Deas Thomson) to Col. Sec., 21 February 1878, C.S.I.L. 78/1764 in S.B. 4/818.4. The phrase on vegetable growing was reported by Dr T.B. Belgrave to S.M.H. 20 July 1878. Deas Thomson's letter is reproduced in full in Appendix, no.1.
6. Vice President, Sydney Hospital (Renwick) to P.U.S., 8 May 1878, C.S.I.L. 78/4035 in S.B. 4/818.4.
(which may well have been in response to pressures from the promoters of the Prince Alfred Hospital, who were claiming that their hospital would meet the city's needs for a general hospital) that 'the public health is more sacred still [than any ministerial secrets which might be at the bottom of the delay], and to trifle with that is one of the worst offences a government can commit',¹ the pressure on the Farnell government became overwhelming. A bargain emerged by which the government promised a grant of £25,000 and possession of the land if it was given representation on the board similar to that it had gained in the negotiations with the Prince Alfred Hospital promoters. The hospital was to be incorporated by act of parliament, which would provide for the government representation, as well as conferring the legal benefits implied by incorporation.² The hospital got its land, it was incorporated, the vote of £25,000 was made. But by the time the building was completed and opened in 1894, the original estimate of £45,000 had more than trebled. Partly this was the product of the more favourable climate of government opinion towards the hospital held by Parkes' administration, which followed Farnell's in 1879. The new premier had already shown his concern for the hospital. Its new president was Dr Arthur Renwick, a political supporter, for a while one of his cabinet

¹ 22 June 1878.
²  P.U.S. to Sydney Infirmary, 6 July 1878, S.M.H. 15 July 1878.
members, and certainly an occasional financial backer. In this setting, the directors allowed the plans to be extended and varied, confident that the necessary additional funds would be forthcoming.

However, there came a period when all government capital payments to the hospital ceased, and consequently all building. Both Alexander Stuart and George Dibbs came to express their doubts, not only on the question of the need for a hospital on the site, but also of the efficiency and integrity of the board. Stuart ordered that no more money be paid to the hospital for its building. Dibbs continued this attitude, involving himself in a further argument with the hospital over the safety from fire of the temporary wards erected when the old building had been pulled down. The Telegraph and the Freeman's Journal echoed these criticisms of

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1 See, e.g., Renwick to Parkes, 3 July 1891, P.C. vol.33, p.45 (A.903, M.L.).
2 Premier and Colonial Secretary, 5 January 1883 - 6 October 1885.
3 Colonial Treasurer under Stuart; Colonial Secretary under Sir Patrick Jennings, 26 February 1886 - 19 January 1887; briefly premier in January-February 1889 and again premier, October 1891 - August 1894.
4 Committee of Inquiry into certain complaints in the management of Sydney Hospital, Report, V. & P. 1883, vol.2, p.917ff; Colonial Secretary (Stuart), Minute on Hospital Accommodation and Position for Sydney, 2 August 1883, V. & P. 1883-4, vol.6, p.493; Colonial Secretary (Dibbs), minute for my successor on Sydney Hospital, 12 January 1887, unregistered paper in C.S.I.L. S.B. 'Papers from Sir Henry Parkes' Room, 1887-90', 4/899.2.
the 'Palace of the Plague'.\(^1\) So the front block stood derelict, half-built and useless, while the directors agitated for funds. Finally, a sensible minute from the Medical Adviser (F.N. Manning) urged that utility demanded the completion of the hospital as quickly as possible. It was probably not without significance that the minute was addressed to Dibbs' successor, Sir Henry Parkes. The social value of the hospital forced the government's hand.\(^2\) Even so, it was not till 1894 that the hospital's new building was opened.

While so much criticism was being levelled at the Infirmary, another committee was preparing plans and organisations which were to culminate in the opening of the Prince Alfred Hospital on the western edge of the grounds of the University of Sydney in 1882.\(^3\)

Charity in England had often grown out of thank offerings for special deliverances. It was a worthy

\(^1\) F.J. 4 August 1883; D.T. 26 January 1882; 17 January 1883; 9 March 1883; 22 October 1883; 4 February 1885.


\(^3\) The negotiations involved in its creation, from the first public meetings after the attempted assassination of Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, to the opening of the hospital, and indeed up to 1918, are well and accurately described by W. Epps, then the hospital's secretary, in a series of articles for its Gazette in 1918-9, which later appeared in book form. He used newspaper accounts and clearly had full access to the hospital's early minute books, which do not appear to have survived.
tradition which the promoters were following in suggesting the erection of a hospital as a memorial to the successful recovery of the Duke of Edinburgh from O'Farrell's would-be assassin's bullet. The original proposal was to raise a fund with which to finance the replacement of the Infirmary with a modern hospital for the city, on the Macquarie Street site. The poor would be more properly served in their sickness and the consciences of the rich doubly assuaged.

But negotiations failed to yield them the Infirmary site. Behind the difficulties of the Infirmary in getting freehold possession of its site - the ostensible reason for its unwillingness to join forces with the Prince Alfred committee - lay a clear attempt to take over the prestige of conducting the leading medical charity of the city. Even in philanthropic activity such varied motives were apparent in the intentions of public spirited gentlemen. The restless analytic energies of Alfred Roberts, moreover, had probably set him off against some of the members of the Board of the Infirmary. He had very quickly come into disagreement with Miss Osburn.¹ When the Infirmary failed them, the promoters turned to the University, who agreed to provide land and co-sponsorship for the new institution, in return for the facilities of a teaching hospital.

Thus by 1876 there were two charitable institutions planning large scale hospital building. Neither board

¹ L. Osburn to H. Parkes, 11 July 1873, P.C., A.899, pp.7-11.
possessed resources or prospects which would enable them to complete their plans without large special grants from the government. The committee of the new hospital had found, like most other charitable organisations, that the willingness of the community to contribute to philanthropic schemes was not extensive, and far short of the plans they felt constrained to approve for their building.

Unlike the Infirmary, the Prince Alfred committee was able to negotiate the shoals of political favour more successfully. The hospital was opened in 1882 with 146 beds, amid great rejoicing and a characteristically long speech from Sir Alfred Stephen. This much had cost $110,000.\textsuperscript{1} Of course, the original plan had not been completed. That day was years in the future. But a modern general hospital had been added to the facilities for the sick poor of Sydney. In the following decade its capacity was extended in various ways: facilities for obstetrics and gynaecology were added, and for medical education, for major surgery in the Listerian manner, and with additional wards. Some of the finance came from large private gifts, some from a specially publicised 'self-denial fund' in 1893 which yielded $4,000\textsuperscript{2} and much from the government.

\textsuperscript{1} Prince Alfred Hospital Gazette 2 July 1918, pp.32-4; 9 September 1918, p.13.
\textsuperscript{2} Ibid., 9 September 1918, p.19.
The stories of the establishment of these two hospitals show how difficult successive governments found it to resist the demands made upon them for funds for such charitable purposes as hospitals. Once plans for improved hospital accommodation were formulated, especially with the backing of the community's leading doctors, there was little the politicians could do about it, except procrastinate. Hospitals were so worthy, their services so much desired, that in the end half finished buildings had to be completed and governments had to make the best of difficult and expensive commitments.

**Specialised provisions**

While these efforts at Macquarie Street and the University were yielding large improvements in the provision of general medical facilities for the sick poor of Sydney, others were turning their attention to improving more specialised services. Of these, that which had already attracted considerable social attention was medical care for destitute women.

We have already met Dr Arthur Renwick, the busy little doctor who was such an energetic honorary physician for the Benevolent Society. His vigorous reports and leadership had produced a marked improvement in the standards of care for women and children in the asylum during the 1860s. Renwick hoped for more than this. He wanted a new lying-in hospital to be established by the Society to replace the old asylum completely.¹ In the

¹ B.S., G.C. minutes, 30 September 1876.
year (1878) following the deaths of Sir Edward Deas Thomson and George Allen, Renwick became President of the Society just as he had succeeded Deas Thomson at the Sydney Infirmary. Under his guidance a new set of rules and aims were drafted which gave clear authorisation for the work of providing medical care for women: for the care of sickly mothers with infants, for those suffering from 'the diseases of women' (as the phrase ran), and for the provision of a lying-in hospital.¹ Like the directors of the two public hospitals, those of the Benevolent Society sought government financial aid. But their pleas were complicated by the stated intention of the Railways Department to extend the main line north from its terminus of Redfern in the Cleveland Paddocks into the city. Any such extension would inevitably affect the asylum in Pitt Street, lying directly in its path.² Meanwhile work in the old buildings continued to be difficult and frustrating.³ Dr O'Reilly, appointed as a paid medical officer on Renwick's elevation, protested against continued overcrowding in the building, lack of real nursing, poor diet and general weakness in the medical care

¹ Ibid., 14 March 1878.
³ In 1875 the Asylum admitted 139 women, including 113 lying-in cases. With reorganisation and some building alterations, as well as medical improvements shortening the period of hospitalisation, the Society was able to admit 409 women in 1900, 233 of them as confinement cases. A.R.s 1875 and 1900.
provided. He resigned in frustrated anger.\(^1\) Dr Warren, his successor, called for a separate ward for the treatment of the diseases of women, an outpatients ward and the establishment of a school for midwives - all envisaged by the revised rules.\(^2\) These men, like the staff at the Infirmary, were rebelling against a previous generation's complaisance at dirt, inefficiency and suffering. Even if it was a charity, there were standards, medical or humane, which demanded something better. New theory called for cleanliness and fresh air, for case classification, for Nightingale nurses. New techniques had begun to make possible the treatment of many more ailments in females, if only the environment was satisfactory. But the buildings erected 60 years previously, in low-lying land adjacent to the city's second cemetery, were found wanting in the light of these demands.

While the virtues of a city loop line, or a new terminus, or an eastern suburbs branch line were all debated and investigated (along with the question of compensation for the Society) through the next 20 years, efforts were made to improve conditions at the old asylum. A ladies committee was appointed, made up of the wives of such notables as Wigram Allen (George's son), Sir Alfred Stephen, Sir John Hay, and J.H. Goodlet.\(^3\) These ladies

1 B.S., G.C. minutes, 15 March 1878.
2 Ibid., 31 July 1879.
3 Ibid., 10 June 1879.
appear to have done little. They disappeared from the minutes after a couple of years. Honorary consulting doctors were appointed in 1881 'in accordance with public opinion'\(^1\) which was demanding improved standards as it learnt of their implications from the doctors. Much energy was expended in surveying sites and considering their relative merits during the 1880s in anticipation of a government decision on the railway question. Fortunately Alexander Stuart refused to be committed to a plan that involved spending £65,000 to purchase a block in Redfern in 1885.\(^2\) Dr Warren continued to be critical of the old site.\(^3\) The objects of the Society were revised again in 1896 to legitimise a practice which had grown up of allowing students from the medical school at the university to attend the asylum for midwifery instruction. The new objects also envisaged the provision of midwifery care to women in their own homes.\(^4\)

The very inadequacy of what was provided by the Benevolent Society stimulated other groups to extend the


\(^2\) Col. Sec. to B.S., 14 September 1883, G.C. minutes, 1881-7, p.145. The land was being offered at the height of the land boom of the 1880s. The price was clearly inflated. It would have absorbed all the Society's resources. Cp. D.T. 22 September 1883 for a contemporary editorial protest.

\(^3\) G.C. minutes, 17 January 1888, a passage excised from the medical report as published in A.R., 1888, because of its critical tone.

\(^4\) A.R., 1896 and 1898.
facilities available for women. G.E. Ardill opened the 'Home of Hope', a maternity home for unmarried mothers and deserted wives, at Newtown in 1884. By 1898 it could provide 30 beds. The Salvation Army opened a similar maternity home in 1893 which had 26 beds by 1898. These two institutions were established with the deliberate aim of associating medical care with social and spiritual regeneration. Ardill, already associated with the Blue Ribbon Army and the Sydney City Mission, among other protestant endeavours, was founder and director of a series of such charities. By contrast with these two institutions which associated medical care with gospel preaching, the Women's Hospital in Crown Street was the creation of a doctor who aimed at lifting medical, rather than moral standards. James Graham became particularly concerned for the need of a new women's hospital after puerperal fever had twice in a year ripped its fatal way through the wards of the Benevolent Society's Asylum. He raised a public agitation, a fund was established, and a hospital begun in 1893. It possessed, from the very beginning, an outdoor or home treatment department, and other wards for surgical cases and complicated births. Graham confidently

2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., Evidence, 22 August 1898, q.2278ff.
4 A.R. 1893.
asserted to the Royal Commission on Public Charities in 1898 that the Women's Hospital possessed all the machinery of a complete and scientific maternity hospital and wanted only a larger building, for they had only 16 beds. The Roman Catholic St Margaret's Maternity Home made its first appearance in the Statistical Register in 1898, but it was probably founded in 1894. It had 42 beds in 1898, the same number as the Benevolent Asylum. Charity certainly took various guises when it came to caring for women in these years.

Another field which the Windeyer Commission had emphasised was the care of children. The Sydney Foundling Hospital and Home for Destitute Children was opened in 1874. The Hospital for Sick Children was established at Glebe in 1880. The former arose out of community concern for the frequent discovery of deserted newly-born infants, of which Sir Alfred Stephen complained to the Empire

There is scarcely an issue of our daily papers which does not report the finding of one or more of those melancholy little "bundles" of nipt-in-the-bud humanity...they are found...dropped on the highway, stuffed like stolen goods into odd holes and corners, oftimes sunk in the slime of unmentionable depths...always dead and...generally murdered.3

1 R.C.P.C., ibid., q.2283.
3 12 May 1873.
A public meeting of ladies was held in August 1873 and the institution set up in May 1874.

Of the 55 children in the hospital in 1875-6, 24 died, nearly all as a consequence of neglect or disease. This high death rate was a sad comment on the morals of the community. Some critics of the institution even claimed that its establishment only encouraged vice and child desertion by its very existence. Certainly the rules were altered in 1875 to permit the admission of infants other than foundlings, with or without their mothers. But still the criticisms continued, and it was claimed that some had refused to subscribe for this reason. True, the fruit of immoral unions could be deposited at the Children's Home, Ashfield, as it came to be called: at least this was better than murdering the children. Many mothers, moreover, found protection and rehabilitation there. Steadily the emphasis of the work shifted from foundlings to the care of mothers and infants, in response to these criticisms. The promoters pressed on doggedly, convinced that the balance of social utility (or 'common sense'), sentiment and Christian commitment were all in their favour.

The Hospital for Sick Children possessed a much larger proportion of medical support among its

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1 A.R. to 30 May 1876.
2 See the able address by Mrs David to the annual meeting 12 April 1907 and the favourable S.M.H. ed. 13 April 1907.
promoters. There was far less danger of a hostile public response to this institution on moral grounds, as the politicians were well aware. Parkes promised £4,250 to the first deputation. The establishment of this children's hospital was a sign that doctors were more confident that medical care for children could be offered with some hope of success outside the family circle. Skill and humanity could now meet in a public, institutional onslaught on the city's child mortality rate. The hospital's aims were to receive sick children between the ages of 18 months and 12 years, exclusive of those suffering from infectious diseases. Payment for services was to be made if possible, and an outdoor dispensary established. On this basis the hospital operated busily, at Glebe for two decades, and then at its present location in Camperdown after 1902 (renamed the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children). Its work was disturbed in the 1890s when the residents of the Glebe expressed great hostility at the establishment of a diptheria ward, which was said to be an unconscionable health hazard to the district. Some tactful pronouncements by leading medical authorities quietened all this. There were to be other agitations in the next decade, involving factional splits on the board over

1 Drs W.S.G. Bedford, Alfred Roberts and W.H. Goode were all strong supporters, A.R. in D.T. 6 January 1880.
2 Ibid.
the new site, and over the operations of the secretary. ¹ These were cross-currents in the labours of the charitable. But at least a specialised service for a much neglected group of sick had been established, yet another expression of the rapid specialisation of the medical profession which was accompanying the great strides in its capacity to combat the ills of the community.

A characteristic, even if minor addition to specialised medical care in Sydney was the creation of an Eye Branch and then the Eye Hospital by the Board of the Sydney Hospital. The combination of poor sanitation and dusty, dry conditions made eye infections a major problem in the colony. Many sufferers needed more attention than they could hope to get at small country hospitals maybe 50 or 100 miles away from their homes in any case. Probably the Infirmary had been treating these cases from the very beginning, but in 1879 the establishment of an Eye Branch was announced to the press.² By June 1882 it had been relocated in the house of the late Captain Towns, Moorcliff, at Dawes Point.³ The first full year of activity (1883) saw 188 indoor and 499 outpatients treated there. From this hesitant

¹ Much of this internal detail is to be found in C.S.I.L. S.B. 'Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children, 1903-11', 5229.
² S.M.H. 11 January 1879.
³ A.M.G. vol.1 (1881-2), p.124. It is still controlled by Sydney Hospital.
and makeshift beginning has grown the Sydney Eye Hospital, currently (1966) seeking to establish a building and endowment fund of $2m.

Another specialised type of institution which was the subject of much informed comment in the 1880s was the convalescent hospital. The analyses of Roberts, MacLaurin, Mackellar and others, presented to Stuart in September 1883 at his request all envisaged such a hospital near Sydney, where the emphasis would be on recuperation and recovery in healthy, rural surroundings.¹ This would free beds in the public hospitals for more urgent cases, an important issue as doctors attempted increasingly difficult treatment in them. The asylums for the aged had fulfilled this need in a way, but only by default. The Coast Hospital was used for this purpose in 1882, but unwillingly and unsuccessfully. A more ambitious and specific project was begun in 1889 with a donation of £10,000 and 500 acres of land near Camden. The donor was W.H. Paling, the principal of a Sydney music firm. It was to be a charity for the sick poor to mark the colony's centenary.² By 1891 there were 100 beds available, admissions being arranged by St Vincents, Sydney and Prince Alfred.³ Despite vice-regal patronage the hospital does not seem to have drawn much support

¹ 'Hospital Accommodation for the City of Sydney', V. & P. 1883-4, vol.6, p.493ff.
² Illustrated Sydney News 24 May 1890, pp.7-8.
³ S.M.H. 26 March 1891.
from the community, and had only a limited usefulness. Perhaps it was too far from the city.

A similar hospital, again initiated by the gift of one man, was the convalescent hospital established under the terms of the will of Thomas Walker, in the grounds of his estate 'Yaralla' at Concord. This time the gift was £100,000, thus obviating the need to open a public subscription list. There were 64 beds in a hospital upon which £75,000 was lavished to provide marble lavatories and a children's playroom. No payments at all were expected from the patients.¹

Further west and south than even Camden another specialised service was being provided through the Christian generosity of yet another merchant. This was J.H. Goodlet's Home for Consumptives at Thirlmere, near Picton. Its location was dictated by current doctrine that dry, rare, clear air was the best healing agent in the fight against tuberculosis. This disease - 'phthisis', 'consumption', 'T.B.' - received an increasing amount of publicity in the 1880s and 1890s as Koch investigated

¹ S.M.H. 16 September 1893.
its properties and hopefully offered inoculations against it. As knowledge increased the prevailing mid century pessimism about it - expressed in Sydney by the practice of sending many advanced sufferers to the Parramatta asylum, or simply allowing them to die at home - was replaced by a more active desire to combat the disease. Goodlet established the home at Thirlmere in 1876 and supported it unaided for 17 years. In 1893 he turned the work over to a public committee because he could no longer afford to do it alone. Presumably the depression had its effects on the capacity of the charitable to keep on with their good works.¹

Over the next few years the committee, with Lady Windeyer an influential figure, found it difficult to survive. In the end another public commemoration overtook them and enabled the Thirlmere home to continue its usefulness for many years. Some influential physicians had taken up the agitation against tuberculosis in the mid 1890s. The Australasian Medical Gazette had an editorial calling for more sanatoriums in May 1894.² Dr Philip Sydney Jones began agitating publicly in 1895.³ In 1897 Lady Hampden, wife of the Governor, called a meeting to establish a fund which would commemorate the

¹ S.M.H. 14 September 1893, 24 September 1896. This hospital remains, now used for chronic cases.
² A.M.G. 13 (1894), p.163.
Queen's diamond jubilee by providing the means for the movement of T.B. sufferers to country districts. Once again Sydney Jones was the chief speaker, emphasising the inability of the poor to pay for country convalescence and calling for various types of facility to be provided. This 'Queen Victoria Fund' was inaugurated at a crowded public meeting at the Town Hall three weeks later, vigorously supported by the press and the doctors. Meanwhile the Thirlmere Home Committee announced its closure because of a lack of funds. Predictably, despite the misgivings of some doctors, the new fund (which already stood at £12,694) took the home over, adding another to it at Wentworth Falls in 1901. The struggle against the 'White Plague' was to become one of the spectacular socio-medical endeavours of the age. Charity was reaching out in this movement into the realm of social reform, though still very obviously charity, for the initiative continued to lie in the hands of the social elite of Sydney.

The government contribution

Not only as a source of funds and occasional regulator of standards, but as a direct supplier of

1 S.M.H. 29 April 1897.
2 S.M.H. 18 May 1897.
3 S.M.H. 26 May 1897, 11 June 1897, 8 September 1897, 2 March 1898.
important medical services for the sick poor, the government took on a significant role in this period. One aspect of its expanded involvement grew out of the care of the aged and destitute undertaken in 1862. In the Windeyer report it was noted that the Liverpool asylum contained about 200 incurable or chronically ill inmates, more than a quarter of the total population of the asylum. In 1876 226 patients, including 43 tuberculosis and 35 paralysed cases died there.¹ These bed-ridden inmates were the products either of the processes of ageing into helplessness, or of admissions of long term illnesses, especially such incurable ailments as cancer and consumption. Their numbers grew from both sources over the next 25 years, making the government asylums a major supplier of hospital facilities. Their role in the field of medical care became indispensable, despite their origins as refuges for destitute people and indeed their continued involvement in this task.

Forces of expansion usually derived from the unwillingness or incapacity of the public hospitals to retain long term cases. But on one occasion a more direct crisis expanded the asylums' work. There was an outbreak of erysipelas in Sydney in December 1875. To provide accommodation and care for the sufferers, whom

¹
R.C.P.C. 1873-4, Report, pp.108-15; Manager, Government Asylums for the Aged and Destitute, Report 1876, V. & P. 1876-7, vol.4, p.928. There were 622 inmates on 1 January, 981 admissions and 714 discharges, as well as these 226 deaths, during the year.
the Infirmary were unwilling to admit because of the acute infectiousness of the illness, the old hospital in Macquarie Street, Parramatta, was reopened for them and placed under the control of the Manager of the Government Asylums. In 1877, after the crisis had passed, the buildings were permanently transferred to the Manager's control, yielding an asylum specifically competent to handle medical cases. By 1880 it held 250 old men, though only perhaps a third were bed-ridden.

The tendency of the hospitals, both in Sydney and in the country districts, to transfer chronic and terminal cases to the asylums became a point of comment by the government officials as the asylums became increasingly overcrowded. Thus 227 cases were admitted from the Infirmary in 1879, of a total of 2,322

1 The papers on this affair, in which the police were much involved, having responsibility to locate and transport cases to the appropriate place of refuge, are enclosed in C.S.I.L. S.B., 'Sydney City and Suburban Sewage and Health Board...1875-76', 4/805.3. The most useful documents are M.A.G. to P.U.S., 20 December 1875, 75/9149; Colonial Secretary to M.A.G., 4 January 1876, attached to 75/9132.

2 Insp. of P.C. to P.U.S., 22 November 1877, C.S.I.L. 77/9722 with 77/6139. Compare Plate IV.


admissions. By 1881 it was 523. The Manager of the Asylums began to talk of them as convalescent hospitals in a community that lacked better alternative accommodation. But facilities in them were sketchy, and aggravated by rising numbers, especially in the women's asylum at Hyde Park. It was the pressure of medical cases which forced the extension of the George Street Parramatta Asylum to take in the 'mill' building across the road, and the movement of the women from Hyde Park to 'Newington'.

In an attempt to control the whole problem of Colonial Secretary's patients in the hospitals, an admission office was opened in August 1884. This at least gave some opportunity for checking the financial eligibility of applicants and of routing them to the most

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3 Ibid., 1879, p.340.
4 Insp. of P.C., Report 1878, V. & P. 1878-9, vol.3, p.947, and in subsequent reports, e.g. 1882 when he noted the closets and drains were 'not seldom' out of order. V. & P. 1883-4, vol.6, pp.649-50.
5 Ibid., 1883, V. & P. 1883-4, vol.6, p.705.
7 See p.228.
appropriate institution. The Coast Hospital was able to take many cases which had previously been sent first to the public hospitals and then to the asylums, and in a way provided a level of service intermediate between the two. It became in effect the hospital 'linked with the Government Asylums' which Stuart had proposed in his minute of September 1885. But the asylums, investigated and found wanting late in 1886, remained responsible for much medical care. There were 245 chronic cases and another 563 requiring treatment in June 1887, of a total of 2,040 inmates. Arising out of the adverse report of the Inquiry Board and the recommendations of the Medical Adviser, the Colonial Secretary approved the appointment of trained nurses, reorganisation to improve the medical classification of inmates, and the initiation of

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1 See p.230 below and Appendix, no.4.
2 See ch.7, sec.3.

The distribution was:
Liverpool - 747 inmates, including 50 chronic and 238 other patients
George St - 678 inmates, including 97 chronic and 160 other patients
Parramatta - 261 inmates, including 57 chronic and 58 other patients
Macquarie Street - 354 inmates, including 41 chronic and 107 other patients.
negotiations to acquire the Destitute Children's Asylum for the purpose of a convalescent hospital.\footnote{Ibid., 4 June 1887, p.609 and 27 August 1887, p.614.}

With the reorganisation of the Charities Department, the new Director of Government Asylums took further vigorous steps to improve the medical facilities available. He underlined, in his long report of 1890, how significant had been the change in the role of the asylums. This firm public recognition of the situation was an important stage in their development. He stated that there had been an increase of 100 in the number of patients in the asylums from 1889 to 1890. He argued that

\begin{quote}
the constitution of these asylums has almost entirely changed during the past five years. They were first established solely for aged and destitute persons...[but] are now practically hospitals for chronic and incurable diseases.\footnote{Director of Government Asylums and Boarding Out Officer, Report of the Department of Charitable Institutions 1890. V. & P. 1891, vol.2, pp.201-2.}
\end{quote}

Dissatisfied with the Parramatta buildings in particular, he called for a central asylum site of 500 acres to provide proper pavilions allowing classification and medical treatment.\footnote{Ibid., p.203.}

In 1893 a step was taken in this direction. The Director conducted the premier (Dibbs) over the Parramatta buildings. So alarmed did Dibbs profess to
be that he authorised the immediate occupation of the Rookwood buildings.¹ About 200 men were moved there during the year,² and several more pavilions were erected.³ Maxted hopefully reported that at last hospital treatment in the asylums was improving for the 1,300 patients now being cared for.⁴ The new Colonial Secretary (Brunker) was similarly concerned to maintain this trend, and approved the drawing of plans for further extensions at Rookwood.⁵ Maxted proposed a scheme costing £70,000.⁶ On this basis a loan estimate vote of £75,000 was obtained in June 1895,⁷ and a scheme submitted to the Standing Committee on Public Works. However, by this time the estimated cost had risen to £108,000, for it was now hoped to replace the buildings at Liverpool as well as those at Parramatta. In cost it was a scheme of the same order as those for building the

⁴ Ibid.
⁵ S.M.H. 21 February 1895.
⁶ Director, Government Asylums to P.U.S., 12 March 1895. Quoted by Critchett Walker (P.U.S.) to Public Works Committee, q.1606.
⁷ N.S.W.P.D. vol.78, p.7648ff, 27 June 1895.
Sydney and Prince Alfred Hospitals. Both the Principal Under Secretary (Critchett Walker) and Maxted claimed to be mystified as to how the plans now formulated reached the committee. These called for a general hospital, and accommodation for ordinary 'yard' inmates, for casuals, for wards to isolate cancer, skin, consumptive and ophthalmic patients, and for a central administrative wing. The committee was not impressed by the expense proposed, by the sketchiness of the plans, and especially by the idea of concentrating all these aged, diseased and afflicted people in the one place. It raised visions in their minds, aided by the evocative promptings of Arthur Renwick, of consumptive sputum wafting on the breeze, the horrors consequent on a failure in the water supply, and of pollution from the Necropolis or of the Potts Hill reservoir. Nor did the heavy expense involved in sewering the site make them enthusiastic. They suggested a tighter admission policy, a smaller convalescent hospital scheme near Campbelltown to cost £52,000 (of which nothing was ever heard) and legislation to compel relatives to pay. ¹ Despite this adverse report, it was the Rookwood site that was permanently occupied, with its facilities focused on the care of hospital cases.

By 1900 the process by which the Government Asylums had taken their place alongside the public hospitals was clearly recognised. They were auxiliary hospitals. Their facilities were still limited, their policies restrictive,
penny-pinching and open to criticism. Yet they were the hospitals for most of the chronic and incurable patients in the community other than those who could afford private treatment. It is for this reason that they have been considered at such length in this context, thus emphasising the ambiguity inherent in the very title given the institutions in 1862. Looking forward from 1900, there was much to be done to lift their standards of medical care. The era of geriatric treatment at the Lidcombe State Hospital was still a long way off.

The government also became responsible for a hospital which scarcely 18 months after its commencement had 219 beds. This was the Coast Hospital at Little Bay. Since the 1881 smallpox epidemic had resulted in such a frenzy of building at Little Bay to provide accommodation for suspected contacts of the disease, Stuart's government was in possession of a hospital which, though constructed of galvanized iron, possessed 106 beds and another 42 in the isolation section. After intermittent use in 1882-3 for smallpox, typhoid and then some convalescent cases from Sydney Hospital, the buildings

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1 The M.A.G. (MacLaurin) gave a useful account of its establishment in the first Coast Hospital Report, V. & P. 1885-6, vol.2, p.575ff. C.R. Boughton, A Coast Chronicle. The History of the Prince Henry Hospital, Sydney, 1963, is a fuller, modern, well illustrated account which is based on the published official sources, both of the hospital and of infectious diseases in Australia, and in the later years, the author's own experiences at the Coast Hospital.
stood empty, a magnet for the schemes of administrators and politicians. Stuart had already argued in his minute on the hospital position in August 1883 that Prince Alfred could meet Sydney's general hospital needs without the aid of the half-completed Sydney Hospital.¹ He also envisaged the provision of 60 fever, 30 lock² and 100 convalescent beds, apart from 520 general, 60 accident and 30 beds for eye cases for the needs of the city. Although he did not mention it in this minute, the Coast Hospital appeared well able to meet some of these special demands. In commenting on his minute the Medical Adviser (C.K. Mackellar) recommended the site be used to supply a temporary fever hospital, a convalescent hospital and a smallpox hospital.³ It was too much for them to resist the temptation. The Coast Hospital promised to be cheaper to run. It was in existence, even if intended only for emergencies, and perhaps best of all, under the direct control of the government. By the end of the year the decision had been made, irrespective of the primitive provisions for medical care available at this bleak and isolated site.⁴

Certainly medical opinion was strongly in favour of isolation for infectious and fever cases, often in

¹ V. & P. 1883-4, vol.6, p.493.
² The term was used, as in 'Lock Hospital' and 'lock cases', of the treatment of venereal diseases.
³ Ibid., p.493 and map.
association with a demand for a convalescent hospital. Yet the place was scarcely examined coolly. The decision was too easy, for it saved the government money and strengthened its hand against the Sydney Hospital. The project was run on a minimal budget, accepting standards of accommodation and treatment becoming increasingly incongruous with the medical demands made upon it. Kerosene lamps were the only illumination till 1912, the water supply was from a local dam, nor were there any sewers before 1900. The assessment made by the Chief Medical Officer (Ashburton Thompson) in 1898 was more realistic:

The Coast Hospital was hurriedly designed and hurriedly built on a site which was hastily selected in 1881. It was intended to serve as a quarantine station for cases of smallpox occurring ashore....Its buildings are very widely scattered, they were constructed in the simplest manner of wood and iron....It may have been suited well enough for the purpose for which it was intended, but to call such an establishment a hospital would be a misuse of words.\(^2\)

Despite these disadvantages patients were treated and cured: not only convalescent and occasional typhoid sufferers, but a widening range of general patients, even to some surgical cases. The hospital had become an essential part of the medical services of Sydney. Its lock and leper wards served the whole state. Above all it was a hospital directly under the control of the

\(^1\) Boughton, p.18.
\(^2\) *Coast Hospital Report 1897, V. & P. 1898, vol.3, p.1215.*
government, providing the government administrators of the 1890s and beyond directly concerned with the care of the sick poor a flexibility never expected by their predecessors in the days following the cessation of transportation.

Country and suburban hospitals

The new standards of hospital care and efficiency came more slowly to the country centres. In 1874 Alfred Roberts wrote a scathing critique of what prevailed:

Constructed many years since, amidst the rough influences of early colonisation, and designed as much to meet the requirements of poor houses as of hospitals, they have been more or less occupied by worn out shepherds and stockmen afflicted with systemic decay rather than by patients requiring scientific treatment. Such institutions afford no inducement to the Committees of management and medical officers to keep them to the level of a hospital standard of efficiency.

Thus established and conducted, they have also failed to command the public interest and sympathy, and have consequently remained at starvation point, their existences, in many cases, saved only from year to year through alms grudgingly bestowed by the government.1

But gradually matters improved. There was rejoicing, in town after town, as the local hospital was opened or rebuilt. Gradually the list lengthened in the Statistical Register, and the numbers treated grew each year. Income rose from £9,297 (government) and £11,797 (private) in 1875 to £41,974 and £52,115 in 1900. There

1 A. Roberts to S.M.H. 9 September 1874.
is little to tell of these hospitals. Scandals and local jealousies sometimes rocked them, as at Orange. ¹

Their plant expanded from tiny two roomed tin cottages, with the addition of fever wards, maternity wards, operating theatres, or the rebuilding of the whole in brick or stone as the opportunity offered. The pressures for improving standards which has already been recognised in such matters as the introduction of Nightingale nurses and criticisms of the Infirmary began to have the same effect in country districts in the 1880s: The Inspector of Public Charities found nurses in 14 hospitals in 1880. Moreover,

...bathrooms now are to be found in all, cess pits and closets are being discontinued - and sanitary conditions, especially as regards drainage, ventilation and personal cleanliness of the patients, are receiving far greater attention, and have come to be considered an integral part of Hospital Committees' duties.²

Their directors were always willing to press the government through the local member for a special grant above their annual subsidy. Meantime they subsisted on a variety of techniques for raising funds locally and convincing the Colonial Secretary's Department that they were entitled to subsidy on them.

¹ Orange Hospital, Petitions and Correspondence, V. & P. 1890, vol.7, pp.313-34.
² The hospitals were Bathurst, Goulburn, Newcastle, Forbes, Maitland, Albury, Deniliquin, Wagga, Young, Parkes, Orange, Singleton, Scone, Armidale. Report 1880, V. & P. 1881, vol.4, p.916.
In Sydney around 1890 there was a further surge of hospital foundation. One strand was specifically religious. The Little Company of Mary, a Roman Catholic nursing order, was established in a convent at Petersham in 1887. They opened a hospital for children in 1889 with a capacity for 16 patients. The foundation stone of an 80 bed hospital for women and children was laid on 7 August 1898.

Suburban growth, like the expansion of country towns, was usually soon followed by local agitation for the establishment of a hospital. From the beginning it was recognised that these suburban hospitals could not compete with the two general hospitals. Typical of them, but by no means the first, was the St George Cottage Hospital. A meeting to publicise the need for a hospital in the Illawarra district was held at Rockdale and chaired by A.G. Carruthers, the mayor. His brother, J.H. Carruthers, local member, busy middle class reformer, efficient solicitor and cabinet member, gave the main address. He argued that poor people were unable to afford treatment at home, nor the long journey to the nearest public hospital, Prince Alfred. £1,000 was needed, Carruthers had said in 1891. At a 'demonstration'

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1 F.J. 8 October 1887.
2 S.M.H. 15 July 1891.
3 S.M.H. 8 August 1898.
4 S.M.H. 11 July 1891 (meeting held 9 July).
in September 1893 he announced that land had been purchased at Kogarah. In May 1894 he gave the main speech at the stonelaying. The hospital was opened on 16 November 1894 with four beds. In its first full year there were 80 admissions, 5 deaths, and a total expenditure of £661. As early as July 1897 a new wing was opened, providing 8 more beds. The original cottage remains 70 years later, though used now only for administrative purposes. In 1966 the hospital had 382 beds and undergraduate teaching status. This process had been repeated before the century was out at Balmain (22 beds), North Shore (25), Western Suburbs (15), and Marrickville (12). In each, whether in suburb or country town, local pride and local need were mixed with charity and an honest dash of self-help in varying and virtually unanalysable proportions.

Dispensaries

To round out the analysis of the medical services which were available to the poor in this period we must

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1 S.M.H. 25 September 1893.
2 S.M.H. 19 May 1894.
3 Statistical Register 1894, p.769.
4 Ibid.
5 S.M.H. 5 July 1897.
6 Teaching status was gained in March 1963. Secretary, St George Hospital to B. Dickey, 14 June 1966.
consider the dispensary movement. The Sydney Infirmary's origins as a dispensary and the regional visitation service associated with it have already been noticed. With population growth and changes in medical techniques this system had decayed. As a public hospital it had retained its outpatient department and the associated dispensary. So too had St Vincent's and the newly established Prince Alfred. The Infirmary had also developed a dispensary at Regent Street Redfern, although it was found increasingly difficult to maintain. In 1880 Canon Stephen urged to his fellow members of the Board of the Infirmary that the dispensary service be reorganised and extended as a service to the poor by the appointment of two doctors at £350 p.a. to maintain the service full time. Other directors, notably Dr Morgan, resisted the suggestion. They saw it as an overwhelmingly expensive task which should be undertaken by the community. The scheme was postponed and the branch dispensary continued as before, with visits from the honorary or resident staff of the hospital.

Another technique for making medical advice and drugs available to the working classes was derived from the doctrine, not of charity, but of self-help. Lodges, trade unions and other friendly societies had long arranged mutual benefits. At first simple funeral benefits were given, then payments in time of sickness or

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1 Sydney Infirmary Board Meeting. D.T. 4 August 1880; 7 August 1880 (ed.).
2 Cf. editorial, 7 August, and Dr Morgan to D.T. 7 August.
injury, and in the 1880s, contracts with doctors to provide medical advice and drugs to financial members of, usually, a district grouping of friendly societies for an annual capitation fee. The system operated usefully in working class areas such as Ultimo and Balmain and then Leichhardt and Newtown, despite the protests of the newly established B.M.A. branch that contract practice depressed the market and attracted potential customers away from private surgeries.¹ With the depression there was a sharp increase in hostile comment and organised resistance to the system by the doctors.² What is important was the expansion of the dispensary movement. In 1892 the United Friendly Society Dispensary, covering the city and Redfern, had approached the Colonial Secretary for a grant of £2,000 to erect their own dispensary.³ While not immediately successful, this move to provide their own premises was soon to come to fruition, especially after the reconstruction of the actuarial position of the societies accomplished by T.A. Coghlan as Registrar 1893-4.⁴

¹ D.T. 8 June 1882 (ed.).
² A.M.G. vol.10 (1891), p.229, reporting the formation of the Western Medical Association [of Sydney] to 'resist lowering of payments by lodges'. Also p.278 re Leichhardt and district. B.M.A. meeting, 4 September 1891, vol.11 (1891), p.19; Presidential Address, ibid., p.154.
³ S.M.H. 26 November 1892.
⁴ S.M.H. 23 January 1895.
Here then were some of the medical provisions made by the charitable of N.S.W. between 1875 and 1900. A great extension had been achieved, even if some of it was makeshift by contemporary standards. Taken in all, the work was worthy of the generation, revealing their devotion and energy. If succeeding generations have come to argue that much remained to be done, it must be pointed out that it was in this closing quarter of the nineteenth century that the physical plant and organisational structure of the community's medical services in the 1960s were established. The men and women of that 'golden age of the bourgeoisie' had built well.

3. Responsibility

Arising out of this consideration of the various hospitals established and conducted during these years, responsibility for medical charity can be seen to have run along several channels. Doctors played an important role: as honoraries, as promoters, as committee members. Occasionally a large private donation was critical, most conspicuously in the case of Thomas Walker of 'Yaralla'. Plainly, the desire to render a christian act of service inspired the work of the Sisters of Charity and the other Roman Catholic nursing orders. This influence can also be found in the life of men such as G.E. Ardill and J.H. Goodlet. A sense of public service and prestige drew many men onto hospital boards, and many more to contribute subscriptions and donations, especially when the appeal was dressed up in some way, e.g. the Prince Alfred
memorial, or the Queen Victoria Jubilee Fund (both of which had both commemorative and royal associations, as well as being medical charities). Efforts were being made, too, to extend the social range of regular subscribers to include the working classes, by appealing among other things to their willingness to take out some form of rough insurance against the cost of illness - through friendly societies and then contribution funds.

But by far the largest single contributor was the government. It is with this aspect of the responsibility for medical charity that this section is largely concerned.

The relationship of the government to the community's medical charities was a lively, debatable issue. Some administrators and one premier officially urged the creation of a government controlled Hospitals Board. The government's specific responsibilities had, in any case, expanded to the point where by 1900 the hospitals were operating within a web of regulation and government facility which made its favour no longer just desirable but essential for the continuing success of their services.

It had been a hospital crisis which had provoked the creation of the office of Inspector of Public Charities in 1866 and the appointment of the 1873 Royal Commission into Public Charities. Windeyer's suggestions that a Comptroller of Charities be appointed were ignored. This was far too regulative a plan for Parkes or Robertson. The fact that the government distributed funds so readily
with little check on their use was probably valued by these two skilled faction leaders as an important form of political capital. Regulation and supervision by a powerful government official would be dangerous. Parkes kept a tight rein on King's activities as Inspector of Public Charities.¹

But heavy government contributions were essential to initiate the Prince Alfred Hospital, and to enable the rebuilding of the Sydney Infirmary. Out of the negotiations with these two hospital boards the government had gained the right to appoint sizeable minorities of their number. This, it was hoped, would enable the views of the chief subscriber to be expressed more successfully. It still did not prevent hostility between the Sydney Hospital and the Stuart and Jennings governments. Possibly the fact that Parkes appointed the ten government nominees had a little to do with this coolness between the hospital and Parkes' successors in office. But in the end the government could not escape from the responsibility of finding the necessary funds to allow the hospital to be completed. Again, it was Parkes who in 1890 took the initiative.

King's successor as Inspector of Public Charities, Hugh Robison (1876-88), produced thoughtful annual reports detailing the annual transactions of the colony's public charities and commenting upon the tendencies he

¹ See Parkes' remarks on the office of Inspector of Public Charities in the debate on the Rookwood Boys Reformatory. N.S.W.P.D. vol.21, pp.3862-4, 6 August 1886.
believed he could discern. He tried to visit as many of the country hospitals as possible each year, commenting to the Colonial Secretary on the standards of medical and administrative efficiency which he found, and on the requests for special grants they sent in so frequently. His executive influence seems, however, to have been negligible.

One man who wished to push the government into an extended burst of hospital provision and control was Alfred Roberts. He produced several schemes on hospital accommodation and control over the years. He was a successful surgeon, associated first with the Infirmary and then with the Prince Alfred Hospital. Indeed he was the driving force in its planning and development.¹ In 1874 he commented scathingly on the standards in country hospitals.² He went on to suggest that the cost of rebuilding could be shared between the government and the local communities on a two for one basis, the government grant to be a loan backed by debentures.³ In 1878, at the height of the argument between the Farrenell government and the Infirmary, he called for a coherent plan for hospital accommodation in Sydney - 'our single duty being to afford succour to the invalid poor'. One hospital commission should see to the provision of general emergency, suburban, clearing, and convalescent

¹ This is quite apparent from Epps' account in Prince Alfred Hospital Gazette 16 April 1918.
² Above, p.214.
³ S.M.H. 9 September 1874.
facilities for the city. Naturally he opposed the 'big' schemes for Macquarie Street, urging instead the full development of Prince Alfred to 420 beds.\(^1\)

At this distance it is difficult to see how close Roberts was to the corridors of power. Certainly in October 1878 Fitzpatrick ordered that, as Roberts had suggested, hospitals were to submit their accounts annually in a prescribed form as a prerequisite to the receipt of government subsidy.\(^2\) The government also allowed him to carry out on their behalf an Australia-wide survey of hospital provisions. It was printed as a parliamentary paper, the main thrust of which was to underline the suggestion that hospital accounts be supervised.\(^3\) So the circular went out, and the Inspector of Public Charities began the annual struggle to gain full returns from country hospitals suspicious of this new inquisition. The circular was endorsed: 'In directing any future payments of...aid from the Public Funds, the Government will be guided by the accuracy and completeness of your return'.\(^4\)

\(^1\) S.M.H. 15 June 1878.
\(^2\) Minute attached to Hospital Returns 22 and 23 October 1878, in C.S.I.L. S.B. 'Report by Dr Roberts on Australian Hospitals, 1878', 4/1086.
\(^3\) V. & P. 1878-9, vol.3, p.973ff.
The smallpox crisis of 1881-2 forced the government into direct and expensive measures for the protection of the public health. It should be noted that Roberts was again the leading figure, and that he was the author of the large report on the measures taken to combat the outbreak. Two permanent legacies of the panic were the construction of the hospital at Little Bay, and the constitution of a Board of Health. The latter was made up of officials and community leaders. An effort was made to concentrate in the hands of the Medical Adviser to the Government such government medical services as there were, as well as seeing to it that he directed the deliberations of the Board of Health. A succession of eminent doctors filled this post between 1881 and 1896: C.K. Mackellar, H.N. MacLaurin, H.N. Manning and T.P. Anderson Stuart - all men of great drive and organising

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They provided enlightened professional advice and in most events, leadership for the politicians in medical matters affecting the government. The Board of Health, established as an ad hoc instrument to fight the smallpox epidemic was soon given statutory existence. Gradually it accumulated powers over matters of public health and played an important part in the regulation of the conditions of life in Sydney and throughout the colony. The work of the Board and of the government's professional medical officers, notably Dr J. Ashburton Thompson, cannot be told here. But in examining the responsibility of the government in the general field of medical and health care, this great extension of its work through the Board into such matters as dairies, sewers, water, cattle slaughtering, diseased meat, and

1 Mackellar, knighted in 1912, found his fulfillment in the Presidency of the State Children's Relief Board in succession to Arthur Renwick. He was also a member of the Legislative Council from 1884 till his death in 1926. He was President of the Bank of N.S.W. as well as being a director of several Sydney firms.

MacLaurin had early pastoral experience. He, like Mackellar, was a director of several insurance and banking concerns. He was Chancellor of the University of Sydney 1896-1914, where he played an important part in its expansion. His biographer, Mrs Catherine Mackerras, regards this as his greatest work. (Her study is still being prepared.)

T.P. Anderson Stuart was Professor of Medicine in the University of Sydney 1884-1919. See W. Epps, Anderson Stuart MD, Sydney, 1923.

Manning was Inspector General of the Insane 1878-98.

2 45 Vic., no.25.
smallpox must be noted. It was comprehensively regulated by the passing of the Public Health Act of 1896.  

Schematic analyses of the sort Roberts produced arguing for extended government intervention were not much to the taste of Parkes. But his more analytic successor Stuart made a deliberate attempt to carry out the sort of review which Roberts had produced. Because he was premier, and not just a correspondent to the Herald, his writing had more immediate results. The starting point of his survey, dated 2 August 1883, was the request of Sydney Hospital for a further capital grant of £50,000. He argued that a supervisory hospital board for the whole metropolis, which could control the placement of patients and plans for hospital extensions, ought to be established. He envisaged provision for seven types of cases: emergency or accident, ordinary, fever and infectious, syphilis in females, convalescent, chronic and lying-in. The argument led him to decide that Sydney Hospital was not necessary as a general hospital and that a small casualty hospital could be erected elsewhere in the city in its stead. He therefore ordered that no further payments be made by the Treasury to the

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1 The story of public and environmental health in Sydney, and N.S.W., has been touched on, with much useful detail from printed sources, in F. Larcombe, 'The History and Development of Local Government in N.S.W., 1857-1919', M.Ec. Thesis, University of Sydney, 1944. A full study, especially with reference to Sydney, stretching from the water and sewerage controversies of the 1850s through the Sydney City and Suburbs Sewerage and Health Commission 1875-6, to the establishment of the State Abattoirs at Homebush in 1912 and the Department of Public Health in 1912-3 would be of great value.
Sydney Hospital for the construction of the new building. Finally, he sought the comments of some leading hospital administrators on the views he had formulated. Their advice (from Drs Roberts, Mackellar, MacLaurin, Cox and Fortescue) confirmed the decision to cease work on the Sydney Hospital, but warily avoided any strong opinion on the advisory board. Thus fortified, Stuart not only refused the hospital further funds but also resisted the subsequent pressure to reverse this decision.

Another way in which the government could exercise closer scrutiny over hospital provisions was to conduct them directly. It was the force of this argument which led to the opening of the Coast Hospital in 1883 and helped justify the expansion of the asylum medical services.

The question of the government order patients in the public hospitals was also re-examined by Stuart's administration. The admission order system was abolished and replaced by what was eventually to become the Hospitals Admissions Depot. Through the actual task of administering the Coast Hospital, government officials gained evidence to justify this change of

1 V. & P. 1883-4, vol.6, p.493ff.
2 P.U.S. to Sydney Hospital, 10 September 1883, ibid., pp.501-3.
3 Deputation Sydney Hospital to Colonial Secretary, 17 September 1883, D.T. 18 September; Protest meeting, 3 October, D.T. 4 October; Deputation 19 October, D.T. 20 October 1883.
policy. Not only were too few convalescent cases being sent from the public hospitals to the Coast, but too many of those sent, having been admitted as government order patients in the first place, were found to be well able to have paid for the services they had received. So the admissions office was opened. It was a simple yet important administrative development. It was at the cost of the convenience of applicants, as well as the income of the public hospitals. But the growth of the government's responsibilities demanded some such rationalisation and protection from exploitation.¹

Twelve months later the Inspector of Public Charities drew the premier's attention to the problem of admissions again. The hospitals had sought an increase in the daily capitation payment from 2s. 3d. to 3s. 8d. Robison argued that the two hospitals were still exploiting the admissions system by means of the privilege left to them of admitting directly cases classified as 'emergency'.² Again Stuart wrote a minute, traversing the questions of the number of beds and hospitals required by the city and suburbs, and of the problem of patients able to pay. He proposed to separate pauper patients from the rest of the sick poor by establishing a separate hospital for them on Flagstaff

Hill, which he confidently believed could be worked at the old rate of 2s. 3d. a day. This would have been a very drastic change from the existing colonial pattern of responsibility for medical care and an assimilation with the dual system then operating in England. He also called for the establishment of district cottage hospitals, to be financed by the sale to the government of the Sydney Hospital and its site. The money, augmented if need be, would also erect a convalescent hospital and a fever hospital, all of which the Sydney Hospital Corporation would conduct. Again he called for a general board to locate patients and control expansion. The basis of this complex scheme was his assertion that

...they [the managers of the Sydney and Prince Alfred Hospitals] have been by the Government and the public placed in the position of Trustees principally, and in greatest degree, to direct in the most efficient manner the great object of relief to the sick poor and the disabled of this vast city and its surroundings, and only in a secondary degree and to the extent of its usefulness of the particular land or buildings placed under its care.

MacLaurin, now Medical Adviser, who had supported the general board idea in 1883, was not now so enthusiastic about it. On the immediate matter of a rate, he suggested 3s. Od. would be the proper fee for pauper patients, based on experience at the Coast Hospital. He

1 Abel Smith, *The Hospitals*, chs. 6, 8.

2 2 September 1885, C.S.I.L. S.B. 4/896.1, reproduced in the Appendix, no.4.
pointed out that pauper patients most frequently required the most complicated medical treatment, which could not be done cheaply and therefore not in the asylums. Rather, he suggested, let even more cases be sent to the Coast Hospital and let its facilities be improved. As for the Sydney Hospital, it was 'of the greatest public utility', even if measured by the standards of accident and emergency cases admitted. It ought therefore to be completed at a cost of not more than £50,000, with a similar amount for Prince Alfred, making £100,000, which was £250,000 less than Stuart's more political and eventually more accurate estimate of the total cost to the government of these two hospitals. MacLaurin went on to underline the need for a fever hospital, with his eye on the Coast again. As for the combined governing body, he would not support it.¹

Since it was not long after this that Stuart was paralysed by a stroke, these conflicting opinions encouraged Dibbs and Jennings, already beset by more urgent political problems, to put aside the plans for a government controlled reorganisation of the city's hospital services. Eighty years later it stands as a pleasant historical might-have-been which could have solved many problems in the years to come. But its focus was broad and optimistic, lacking in any explicit awareness of the political difficulties such a scheme would have implied.

¹
16 November 1885, encl. to C.S.I.L. 85/12418, ibid.
So the government fell back on the expansion of the Coast, the continuation of capitation payments and the issue of occasional regulatory circulars in advance of annual subsidy payments as the means by which it made its voice heard in the field of hospital care. Thus in August 1886 it was decreed by the Colonial Secretary's Office that building subsidies would not be granted until plans had been submitted and approved, along with details of local population and other hospitals in the district.¹

When it came to the Sydney Hospital, Dibbs, like Stuart, reached the conclusion that its present practices, in this case the continued use of wooden huts as temporary wards, were objectionable because they were considered to be a fire hazard. Again funds were refused, in December 1886, until the huts should be pulled down.² If delay was Dibbs' intention, he succeeded splendidly, for it was 1894 before the hospital was opened. What is important is that the intervening seven years saw official and public analyses of the need for extended hospital provision nearly all being directed to the government as the body which could act upon them. Some even suggested that the suffering of the sick was the fault of the government.³ As we have seen, public

¹ Circular to all hospitals, August 1886. Copy encl. to C.S.I.L. 86/9877 in 1/2624 (Papers on Hand, 1886).
² P.U.S. to Sydney Hospital, 22 December 1886, C.S.I.L. 86/12577 in S.B. 4/896.1.
³ M.A.G. to Hospital Secretaries, 18 April 1888, and replies, C.S.I.L. 88/4579, encl. to 88/6782 in ibid.
philanthropy was not completely inactive around 1890: the Carrington Convalescent Hospital, 'Yaralla', several suburban hospitals and the work of the Little Company of Mary were all inaugurated in these years. But to complete the Sydney Hospital took a full resolution debate in the Legislative Assembly, 1 a report of the Standing Committee on Public Works, 2 an adjournment debate, 3 and an act of parliament. 4

Meanwhile the Medical Adviser could report that the Hospitals Admissions Depot had dealt with 17,985 applications in 1890-2 in the following way: 5

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<th>Sent to:</th>
<th>1890</th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>1892</th>
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<tr>
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<td>1330</td>
<td>1538</td>
<td>1401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Alfred</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>656</td>
<td>738</td>
<td>633</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moorcliff</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>185</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asylums for the Aged...</td>
<td>1137</td>
<td>1555</td>
<td>1817</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1107</td>
<td>961</td>
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<td>Trusses</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>5485</td>
<td>5960</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 5 November 1890, N.S.W.P.D. vol.49, p.4945ff.
3 26 November 1891, N.S.W.P.D. vol.54, p.3061ff.
4 Sydney Hospital (Completion) Act, 55 Vic., no.24.
In a minute of 1 December 1891 he outlined the terms under which hospitals other than these would now be subsidised. In 1894 a further requirement was added, that these hospitals must have qualified medical officers on their staff.¹ Unfortunately, some of these requirements were often evaded.²

A more startling, though abortive, proposal focused on the problem of financing the hospitals, was a hint by Dibbs (when premier) that there should be a hospital tax on property, a poor rate in fact. He justified the proposal by asserting that the hospitals were not receiving subscriptions at a proper rate.³ But it was only a politician's kite at a time when taxation was the topic of the day. The 1898 Royal Commission into Public Charities suggested, as an alternative, that the country hospitals be turned over to the local municipal councils and financed out of local rates. Since the municipal and shire structure was not fully established, even in outline, until 1906, this was an unrealistic suggestion.⁴ With the problems of hospital control and subsidy perhaps a little better

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³ S.M.H. 29 July 1893.
defined, but with the hospitals of the colony clearly dependent on the government for more than half their income, the century closed.

Certainly government responsibility for the sick poor in the previous generation had been large. What had happened in the 1880s was that the government's direct responsibility increased. Leaving aside the question of the social class of those who sought free or cheap medical aid, this extended intervention of the government in the field of public medicine was itself an important part of the process by which the provision of medical care ceased to be a class responsibility with moral assumptions guiding its provision, and became a community service to which the old moral condemnations no longer adhered. As the administration took a larger active part in providing these services, the argument that they were available to all in the community was strengthened. Medical need alone began to replace the earlier complex of poverty and sickness as the basic criterion of eligibility. The anonymity of government administration confirmed this tendency to remove the provision of much medical care from the field of charity to that of a social service. It must be emphasised that this tendency was a long way from the provisions enjoyed in Australia three generations later. That the government proved willing to intervene in the provision of certain medical services certainly did not make Stuart, MacLaurin, Ashburton Thompson or Sydney Maxted socialists before their time. They were operating in response to demands typical in the Australian colonial environment for the provision of public resources to deal
with a range of social needs which would not otherwise have been met. Once the government did become involved, its work for the sick poor became susceptible to those pressures of growth which arose from administrative rationalisation, analysis and efficiency. There was no going back. The commitments already made became additional reasons for increased intervention of the state, especially by the Labour government which came to power in 1910.
CHAPTER 6

STATE CHILDREN, 1875-1900

From the publication of the report of the Public Charities Commission in 1874 to the end of the century, the community's approach to the care of destitute children changed greatly. In 1875 the 'barracks' were full. The children in them were held there by legal restraints, cut off from the rest of the community. By 1900 the State Children's Relief Board had been working for 20 years. The state had legislated to redefine its responsibilities towards all children it helped to support. Wherever possible they were to be brought up in the community, under the general supervision of the State Children's Relief Department. It was the beginning of a permanent and successful venture in the care of destitute children. They were no longer to be locked away, out of sight and mind except on festive occasions. The community accepted direct responsibility for their care, seeking realistically to recreate the conditions of family life of which they had been deprived.

While examples of the older institutions remained alongside the new system, the persistent onslaught of the critics against the 'barracks' meant that attitudes and conditions in them became far more humane and related more closely to life in the community. The government's own industrial schools and reformatories shared in this process. It gradually became clear that the state's facilities for the care of children should be integrated, and though institutional control should
Children in Lynch’s Court, off Clarence Street, Sydney, ca 1875.
remain, it should only be used as a last resort. The application of these ideas, however, was by no means complete by 1900.

Accompanying this improvement in institutional care was an increased awareness in the community of the conditions which brought children into destitution or illness, and the beginnings of a willingness to legislate to control them. This willingness had been expressed in the previous generation by the passing of the acts for industrial schools and reformatories. These had dealt only with end results. Some people now wished to protect children in their own homes, and to support families in order that they should not become burdens upon the state or be deprived of family care. This realisation that the environment in which children were reared could be controlled for their benefit was only partly accepted by 1900. It was to require a full scale effort at community education by the President of the State Children's Relief Board between 1902 and 1914 before that attitude was widely accepted.

1. **Charitable institutions and 'boarding out'**

   It has already been suggested that the Windeyer Commission's report on charitable provision for children was a propaganda publication. In addition it was a sustained argument, critical of institutional care for children and laudatory of 'boarding out'. Despite the

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1 Once again the work of Dr Govan must be noted and acknowledged.
array of authorities quoted by Windeyer describing experience in England and even South Australia, his vision was far more advanced than current practice. He was advocating a major shift in the techniques of care for children which appear to the eyes of the 1960s to have been for the better. He argued that:

Systems for the management and care of paupers and pauper children which fifty years ago passed unchallenged, under the closer examination and the more earnest attention devoted of later years to the social questions, have fallen into disrepute. None more so than that of congregating large numbers of children in charitable institutions.

Institutions were easy to control. They had the fascination of size and order. But there was no possibility of individual treatment, no hint of family life. They were destructive of self-reliance, so mechanised and efficient were they:

The affection and gratitude which spring up in the mind of the young, from close personal intercourse with those who protect and cherish them, must be utterly wanting in the mind of a little pauper reared amidst 800 children, half of whose names are unknown to the official whose perfunctory care passes for kindness, if she is not actually harsh. 1

Instead, he wanted boarding out of the children 'with responsible families in their own rank of life'. The families were to receive maintenance payments. The real gains would not be the significantly reduced costs of caring for state children, but the moral advantages of freedom from the 'barrack system' and a real

approximation to family life. Certainly, care would be needed in the selection of families, provision for religious and secular instruction, and in supervising the progress of the children. But Windeyer was confident these conditions could readily be met.¹

While political instability made it impossible for the politicians to give sustained attention to the recommendations of the Royal Commission, several influential citizens who shared Windeyer's vision sought to press the agitation on. The barracks must go - this was the theme of editorials in the Empire and the Herald.²

This was also the conviction of Mrs William Windeyer, Mrs Andrew Garran and Mrs James Jefferis. The first was wife of the author of the Charities Commission reports, the husband of the second became editor of the Herald in 1873, the third was newly arrived from Adelaide with her husband who had been appointed to the Pitt Street Congregational Church. Windeyer was a Parkes supporter, as was Garran. It was through him that they mounted their attack. In the Legislative Assembly's discussion on the State Children's Relief bill in 1880, Farnell and Fitzpatrick made it plain they had discouraged the efforts of the group during their period of office in 1878. When Parkes returned to office he received exhortations from Mrs Windeyer, James Jefferis and Andrew Garran all recalling to his memory the

¹ Ibid., p.53.
² Empire 22 January 1875; S.M.H. 4 September 1876.
Report and his favourable comments on boarding out in 1874. Mrs Windeyer wanted a lead from 'someone in a position of authority'. Parkes took the point, but cautious as ever, did nothing more than make a grant of £200 on the 1879 estimates towards the work of the 'Boarding Out Society' which had been established by these social reformers. That they were able to accomplish anything was due to the support given by the Benevolent Society. Not only did Renwick join the committee but the Benevolent Society passed on to the new society several children for whom they found parents.

While the pragmatic Parkes watched the experiment, the Inspector of Public Charities in his Reports for 1878 and 1879 contributed further propaganda in favour of boarding out. He emphasised that the children could be removed from the associations of pauperism and be exposed instead to 'examples of individual effort, industry and self-denial'. Thus would be avoided the danger of perpetuating pauperism through the influence of the institutions. When the problem of control cropped up late in 1879 - that is, the legal question whether

1 Empire 5 March 1874, report of debate in Legislative Assembly.
2 Mary Windeyer to Parkes, 24 April 1879, P.C. A.930, pp.241-3.
the new society could care for children as State children once they had been discharged from the Benevolent Asylum, he argued that the Colonial Secretary could give special permission to this new society to deal with state children. He looked forward to an act which would permit boarding out as the appropriate mode of care for such children.\(^1\) Doctrine was being tested, problems solved and the foundations for an act of parliament being laid.

On the other hand, the representative of established charitable effort for neglected children thought otherwise. G.F. Wise, treasurer to the Destitute Children's Asylum, argued that it would be impossible to find homes for the children presently cared for at Randwick. He could see no benefit in boarding out and only the glories of life at Randwick.\(^2\) The Randwick institution contributed several items to the growing pressure of criticism against the 'barracks'. There was, of course, the scathing assessment of the Windeyer Commission, which argued that the Asylum's admission policy was at variance with its humane and charitable aims and that its machine-like routine was destructive of any spontaneity of character that might have existed in the children living there.\(^3\) The Directors involved themselves in a demeaning argument with the government over the method of calculating costs at the asylum.

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\(^1\) B.S. to Col. Sec., 19 November 1879, and Insp. of P.C. minute on it, C.S.I.L. 79/9174.

\(^2\) G.F. Wise to S.M.H. 5 November 1875.

\(^3\) Second Report, p.96ff, especially p.105, part ii.
They were seeking some way of discrediting the Royal Commission's Report.¹ There was a death under suspicious circumstances in 1875 and a confusing series of comments by the Board in explanation of it.² The desertion of a dozen boys in 1876 brought two official government inquiries.³ The asylum organisation was changed in an attempt to combat the many criticisms being voiced. Efforts were made to increase the number of staff; the dairy and other industrial work ceased; the daily routine was said to have been made less mechanical; the children were brought under the care of the Council of Education for their instruction.⁴ Then in 1879 yet another move brought disrepute to the Society, when a very obvious piece of electioneering was arranged to put a group of strong Orangemen, led by John Davies, on to the directorate.⁵ Another investigation on ill-treatment and the Board's mellifluous report on the matter,⁶ continued disagreement between the Inspector of Public Charities and the Board over their accounting,⁷ internal

¹ Coulter, pp.36-7.
² C.S.I.L. 76/1096.
³ Col. Sec. minute 14 January 1876, C.S.M. 17551.
⁵ Freeman's Journal 22 February 1879.
⁷ D.T. 8 July 1880.
disagreements, and a persistent stream of criticisms from the Daily Telegraph all contributed to the Society's bad odour, and to the willingness of the public to prefer alternative techniques of child care.

The arguments Parkes used when introducing the State Children's Relief Bill in 1881 show that for all his sympathy with boarding out, he was not willing to view the scheme, at least publicly, as anything more than an experiment, now to be given legal sanction. He moved cautiously when it came to the question of closing the orphan schools or the Destitute Children's Asylum. For the time being he saw boarding out as an 'auxiliary system'. Some resisted the idea of making monetary payments for the support of children: this was the suspicious attitude of those who feared the waste of public money and the increase in state functions. But the weight of opinion in the house was hostile to the 'barracks' and hopeful that this new system could replace it. There was, in particular, a hope that the scheme would involve people willing to help, as foster parents or as visitors. There was in this sense a hope that the government's direct administrative responsibility would

1 D.T. 2 January 1880, 7 May 1880, 7 July 1880.
2 First reading speech, 20 January 1881; N.S.W.P.D. vol.4, p.156.
3 Second reading, 17 March 1881, ibid., pp.972-4.
4 Davies, ibid., p.974.
decrease. 1 Parkes was unwilling to erect a new ministerial department of government. He preferred to create a Board, with legal powers, government finance and perhaps some civil servants to carry out its orders. He wished 'to leave benevolent and enlightened persons...to carry out their views'. 2 Of course, a new government instrumentality was being created. It was to expand with time and further legislation, to become the Department of Child and Social Welfare.

The Act 3 which was finally passed provided for the State Children's Relief Board to claim guardianship of State children from any institution supported in whole or in part by the government. Thus at a blow the 'barracks' lost their exclusive control. The Randwick Board would no longer be able to select so judiciously the 'prime' children, and dun the government for their support. Instead, the new Board could remove State children from any institution except the reformatories and arrange for their boarding out.

In due course the Board was set up. Arthur Renwick became President of yet another charitable organisation; Lady Allen, Mrs Garran, Mrs Jefferis, Miss Stuart, Mrs Windeyer, Sir George Innes, Lady Jennings and J.R. Street were all appointed. Renwick's first report, and those which followed it for some years, were as Govan has

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1 E.g. Kidd, p.975, Stuart, p.977.
2 Ibid., p.988.
3 44 Vic., no.24.
pointed out, deliberate expositions of the concept of boarding out, underlining its moral advantages over the previous system, and the care being taken in selecting suitable foster parents.¹

While suggesting remedies for the difficulties found in working the Act, the Board pressed on with the programme of withdrawing children from public institutions. Many came from the Benevolent Asylum. The orphan schools were empty by August 1886. The children at Randwick were more difficult to extract. Through 1883-5 the Destitute Children's Society negotiated, at first to retain all the children paid for by the government and the economy of scale they represented; then to reduce the size of the exodus; and finally to retain some government subsidy.² But the children were yielded up and the Society, in an attempt to retain some dignity, advised the government that they no longer wished to receive any government subsidy.³ By 1887 the daily average had fallen to 240 children.⁴ In the end 306

² D.C.A. Board meeting, D.T. 7 June 1883; P.U.S. to D.C.A., 5 December 1883, D.T. 31 December 1883; D.C.A. to P.U.S. and Insp. of P.C. minute of 22 January 1885, C.S.I.L. 85/999 with 87/7122 in 'Papers on Hand 1887', 1/2680; Boarding Out Officer to P.U.S., 30 September 1885, 85/10965 with the previous paper.
³ D.C.A. to P.U.S., 3 December 1885, C.S.I.L. 85/13046 with unregistered memo of Insp. of P.C., 1 March 1886, ibid.
⁴ Annual meeting, D.T. 24 January 1887.
children were boarded out from this asylum. Nor did the Board find any difficulty in arranging satisfactory foster parents or 'lady visitors' to help supervise the children. The community seemed willing enough to share in the project. The number of paid staff also grew rapidly as the Board became the channel through which children were passed into the care of the state.

As early as his second report (for 1882-3), Renwick made a number of incisive comments on the experience of the Board, and on the range of legislative or administrative changes he wished to see made. He argued, for instance, that the clause leaving power to order the withdrawal of children from institutions in the hands of the Minister tied the Board down too much. What it meant, of course, was that the politicians were

1 S.C.R. Bd., Report 1890, Appendix D, p.15 gives the sources from which the Board drew its children in the first ten years.
Benevolent Society 2754
D.C.A. Randwick 306
R.C. Orphan School 180
Protestant Orphan School 182
'Vernon' 218
Girls' Industrial School 88
Ashfield Infants' Home 66
Various Hospitals 69
Newcastle Benevolent Society 37
Other Institutions 6

3906

2 See below, p.275.
4 The Colonial Secretary till 1905.
unwilling, as yet, to let the matter completely out of their hands. But Renwick went on to make a long series of suggestions: he urged the establishment of a receiving depot to be conducted by the Board, as a central place where children could be sent prior to their being boarded out. Already he had become aware that the exclusion of the reformatories from the Board's competence made for problems. The Board was finding itself responsible for children who were not immediately susceptible to home care and for whom some type of disciplinary care was needed. A more flexible system of facilities was required. Renwick also argued that parents should be compelled to support children, and that failure to do so should be treated as child desertion. He called for legislation against unlicensed foster mothers. He wanted powers to stop vexatious visits of parents to their children. He urged that deserving widows or deserted wives should be permitted to retain the custody of their children under the supervision of the Board and so receive maintenance payments for them. Anomalies of detail, especially in Section 5 of the Act, covering supervision of apprentices, needed amendment. The administrative improvements he suggested were legion: medical care at public cost, free rail travel for Board members and its officers, names of the children to be omitted from the reports and so on.

The significance of all this was that the experiment was fast becoming an established system. Renwick and the Boarding Out Officer (Sydney Maxted) were seeking to centralise and rationalise the whole range of provisions for children which the government
provided or helped to provide. The needs of the child could be more readily provided for if its classification was in the control of one organisation. The Board, and the Department which had been created, did not simply view its task as that of 'emptying the barracks'. Farm homes were established in the Moss Vale district in 1885 to provide for children whose health or personal habits made them temporarily or permanently unacceptable.¹

Renwick's suggestions for legislative change, deriving as they did from the experience of his Board and its officers, show again how social administration can grow by a process of self-generation, stimulated by direct experience with the problems of caring for the people in need. Once the doctrine had, after six years of agitation, been given legislative and administrative expression, its development became a function of the labours of that administrative unit, even to the point where the leaders of the original agitation were to claim that 'section 10' of the 1896 amending legislation was completely at variance with the original doctrine. That amending Act² was a piece of tidying up which gave the Department at least some of the changes Renwick and Maxted had been calling for. Not only could widows and deserted wives receive cash payments for the care of their children, but such details as power to regulate apprenticeships of State children, the age up to which the children could be boarded out (raised from 12 to 14 years), the

² 60 Vic., no.19.
extension of the department's power of visitation for a further two years after that, the power to press for maintenance, control of property and of the access of parents to their children once boarded out, were all delegated to the Board and the department. Moreover, as we shall see, it was to become the department through which an increasing number of acts for the protection of children were administered.

2. Other Institutions

Institutional care was not by any means abolished by the passing of the State Children's Relief Act. On the one hand, the industrial and reformatory schools continued to operate, although their functioning was vitally affected by the new system. On the other, public and private charitable institutions for the care of various groups of children continued to operate. The Female School of Industry proceeded quietly along. The Ragged Schools still had a few years of service ahead of them, until the state's education system became truly free and universal. The Institute for the Deaf and Dumb and the Blind (of which Renwick was President) moved into its large new premises at Darlington in 1872 and provided shelter and some modicum of care for 70-100 children at a time. The Roman Catholic Church opened a similar institution at Waratah, near Newcastle, a few years later.¹

¹Freeman's Journal 13 April 1878.
The establishment of the Foundling Hospital in 1874 we have already noticed. After 1876 it was known simply as the Infants' Home, Ashfield. Its objects in 1880 were reported by the Inspector of Public Charities as: 'to bestow aid and shelter on friendless women and deserted wives who, without such aid, would experience much difficulty in obtaining employment, being burdened with the charge of young and often delicate or sick children'.

A useful arrangement operated between the Benevolent Asylum, so often the refuge for foundlings or destitute families, and the Home. This eased the pressure on the facilities of the Pitt Street building, just as the boarding out work of the State Children's Relief Board had done.

As part of the agitation for home care of children in the 1870s, Mrs Jefferis had taken the initiative in setting up a Cottage Home for Destitute Children in 1879. This was an attempt to apply the 'Family System' where a married couple cared for a group of children. She leased a house in Newtown, found a suitable couple, and raised the small amount of money necessary. By 1885 the 'Cottage Home' was located in Burwood, and another had been established next door. Predictably, Mrs Windeyer and Mrs Garran were serving on the committee. Little more is heard of them after this. Probably the establishment of the cottage homes associated with the State Children's

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2 Cottage Home for Destitute Children, A.R. 1885.
Relief Board and the departure of Mr and Mrs Jefferis from Sydney took the drive out of the scheme.

The Roman Catholic Church protested vigorously at the demise of the Roman Catholic Orphan School at Parramatta. Cardinal Moran claimed the school belonged to his church\(^1\) and when faced with its final closure in August 1886 ineffectually threatened to sue the government for compensation.\(^2\) But that was all. The Roman Catholics had now to conduct their own orphanages, or arrange for the children to be boarded out through the State Children's Relief Board. Although references to orphanages conducted by this church do not appear in the *Statistical Register* until 1894, their very range suggests some or all of them had been operating for some years, with the closure of the Parramatta school, no doubt as a stimulus to their establishment. Since there was a strong critical case hostile to institutional care for children, it was perhaps a sign of the traditionalism and possibly of the isolation of the Roman Catholic Church that it should insist on setting up orphanages in nearly all its dioceses through the colony. In 1894 there were 10 children at the West Maitland Orphanage, 70 at St Joseph's, Kincumber, 70 at St Anne's Orphanage and Home for Female Blind, Liverpool, 43 at the Goulburn Orphanage, 43 at Bathurst, 53 at Albury and 39 at St

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\(^1\) D.T. 8 June 1885.

\(^2\) D.T. 14 August 1886, 16 August 1886.
Martha's Industrial Home, Manly. Other institutions were added in the next 10 years.

The best publicised of these institutions was the industrial school for boys conducted by the St Vincent de Paul Society. It was begun as a home for destitute boys at Five Dock, with L.F. Heydon as the leading citizen associated with it. Very soon after its establishment government subsidies were sought for it. A favourable report from Sydney Maxted and some fairly nominal conditions about the admission of protestant children yielded a £250 government subsidy. In the next year the venture was taken up by the Society of St Vincent de Paul as a 'special work'. Plans were then made for removal to a new site at Westmead. By the end of 1897, 40 boys were living there. A year later the numbers had doubled. Attempts to extract a capital grant from the Lyne-See government failed. Reports showed that, as so often was the case, enthusiasm had grown beyond material resources. The boys were living

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1 L.F. Heydon to Col. Sec., 1 October 1892. C.S.I.L. 92/12776 with 03/9791 in 13/1537.
2 Director, Department of Charitable Institutions to P.U.S., 15 November 1892, and Dibbs' minute on it. 92/14769 in ibid.
3 A.R.s 1897, 1898.
4 President of the [Sydney Council] of the St Vincent de Paul Society to Col. Sec., 27 September 1899. 99/17509, ibid.
in crowded quarters. The industrial training was inefficient.\textsuperscript{1} The pressure on Lyne succeeded in gaining a subsidy of £750 for 1901-2.\textsuperscript{2} The item disappeared from the 1903-4 public accounts: reports from officers of the State Children's Relief Department had noted the unwillingness of the Society to allow boarding out from the school\textsuperscript{3} and if necessary, willingness to forego government subsidy. The financial stringency of that year probably demanded it anyway.

Here was an enthusiastic and reasonably efficient attempt at a private industrial school. It did not enjoy the benefits apparently promised by the 1866 Act, but for about five years it was supported to a certain degree by the public purse. Efforts were made to train the boys into a trade, and they could hope for some success, since the minimum age of entry was ten. The minor but satisfying evidence of this was the production of the annual reports, both of the school and the Society, at Westmead. As Cardinal Moran argued:

\begin{quote}
Not only were the orphan boys who were drawn from the dangers and the miseries that would probably befall them...but also those who might be regarded as the outcasts of society, were brought within the
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[3] C.S.I.L. 03/9791 with ibid.
\end{footnotes}
influence of religious education and prepared for their future career in life...

This could stand as the credo of all the Roman Catholic institutions for children.

Other churches came to be interested in the care of children around the turn of the century too. It has been argued that one of the fruits of a quickening social concern in the 1890s among protestant churches was an increased willingness on their part to engage directly as organisations in charitable activities, establishing homes and centres for a wide variety of social needs. Certainly 'Dalmar', the children's home of the Central Methodist Mission, was a deliberate attempt at social service with the most up-to-date principles of operation. It began at Woolloomooloo and was moved soon to Croydon. There were 21 children there at the end of 1894, 18 months after its establishment. The children admitted were deserted and neglected. Occasionally they were sent there by magistrates' orders under the Children's Protection Act. Indeed, that Act, with the power it gave to magistrates to commit children to homes or industrial schools of a charitable nature, may well have been a stimulus to its establishment. The 1898 Royal Commission was unwilling to recommend, however, that this or any

1 S.M.H. 29 June 1901.
2 Bollen, 'Protestant Churches...', p.262ff.
3 Statistical Register 1894, p.786; R.C.P.C. 1897-9, Third Report, p.31.
other church home for children should get government subsidy. Their work was to remain charitable and independent, stimulated by the continuing problem of deserted and mistreated children in the city of Sydney.

The Church of England began a small home for children at Balmain about the same time. The returns showed that 26 children were admitted in 1894. G.E. Ardill had also become involved in this field. As an adjunct to the Home of Hope at Newtown, he established a Babies' Home. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, of which he was secretary and director, was its governing organisation. It provided accommodation for 20-30 babies. In 1887 he set up a home for older children at Liverpool, and in 1890 with a gift of property from W.H. Paling, another near Camden. By 1898 the original 'Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children' had been transformed into the 'Society for Providing Homes for Neglected Children'. As with all Ardill's work, it was done on the barest finance, in run-down buildings which usually caused observers to be critical of the whole venture. The Royal Commission certainly argued that the 47 children at Liverpool were living in crowded, sub-standard accommodation, and that those at Camden could scarcely learn much on a property of a few acres with barely a cow to its name.  

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1 R.C.P.C. 1897-9, Third Report, p.31.
2 Ibid., pp.8-21.
The Destitute Children's Asylum had also become a private charitable institution. Its population levelled off at around 170 children for the 30 years of its second phase of activity, all of it dominated by the organising energies of the superintendent, Joseph Coulter. It was the subject of frequent government investigations as a possible site for various institutions. Its final fate, to be noted later, was not without honour.

It can be seen that although the State Children's Relief Board reduced the numbers at Randwick and enabled the closure of the orphan schools, by 1900 there was a resurgence of institutional care of children. The emphasis on family life had probably had a useful effect in humanising these institutions but it cannot be denied that, in absolute terms, many children still spent their childhood in such places. The State Children's Relief Board itself, in the next decade, was to place more emphasis on these homes and institutions. But the days of the great, machine-like, barracks were over. The very increase in numbers of institutions offering care for children, as well as the persistent emphasis on home life in them showed how far the community had moved from the simple enthusiasm which had surrounded the great gathering which watched the laying of the foundation stone at the Randwick Asylum in 1856.

3. **Industrial schools and reformatories**

The care of children who were committed by the courts to the Vernon, to the Girls Industrial School, or
the Girls Reformatory remained a controversial administrative problem. In his first report to parliament as superintendent of the Vernon, F.W. Neitenstein argued that despite the intention of the Industrial Schools Act the boys were being sent to the ship as if it were a reformatory. No reformatory for boys existed. Local benches seemed only willing to regard the Vernon as a place of punishment, as did public opinion. It was a severe and continuing limitation on the concept of the Vernon as an 'industrial school'. Neitenstein was forced to concentrate on discipline, and found it difficult to offer the activities which might have had the reforming impact which the community expected of a reformatory. In fact, the distinction between industrial and reformatory schools had broken down in N.S.W. as in England.¹ The stigma of the Vernon was the stigma of those who had been through the courts and sent for punishment.

With the passing of the State Children's Relief Act the new Board had to work out a double relationship with the industrial schools and the reformatory. Already the power to withdraw children from the State reformatories was denied the Board by the Act. Any plan to withdraw them from the industrial schools required specific ministerial sanction. In fact, the Board does not seem to have drawn more than 300 over its first ten years of

operation, 7½ per cent of the total.¹ This shows that permission to take children was granted to the Board. But its powers were effectively limited to children under the age of 12. The Board may well have hesitated, moreover, to withdraw any whose committal was the product of actual criminal conviction. It is to be noted, however, that children already in the care of the Board remained thus supervised for another six years of apprenticeship after they reached the age of 12.

But the other side of the story was the frequently expressed desire of the Board that they should have disciplinary institutions available to them, where they could send recalcitrant State children. In fact, the Board believed it could and should conduct a reformatory for boys, and be given control of that for girls.² Not only would this be a further disciplinary option, but it would also give a more flexible range of prospective destinations for the children committed to its care. The recommendation was an expression of the Board's confidence that it could do the job more successfully than the Prison Department or the vague supervision given by the Department of Public Instruction. Already the Board had begun to investigate the use of 'cottage homes' for children unsuitable for boarding out: children who were, for example, scrofulous, or what we would call

¹ Above, p.247, n.1.
mentally retarded. It was part of the modern doctrine of care for neglected children, as Mrs Jefferis had shown. Any reformatory the Board might conduct would be on the 'cottage home' lines.

The State Children's Relief Board was not the only group concerned about the effective lack of a reformatory for boys, properly conceived and conducted on modern lines. The Comptroller-General of Prisons was urging action in 1882. But this was advice to a premier who could not be convinced of the need of anything more than the splendid nautical training ship with which he had been associated for 30 years. Parkes was to argue, in the debates of 1886-7, that there was not the supply of criminal boys to warrant the establishment of a reformatory. But Stuart was willing, in this as in many other matters, to consider the problem which Parkes put aside. Three months after the State Children's Relief Board report, he requested an assessment of the Girls Industrial School and the Reformatory from the Inspector of Public Charities. Once more the contradictions in the workings of the Industrial School were drawn out: it contained both neglected children of tender age taken in for protection from evil parents, and 'those older girls

1 Above p.248.
sent there because they themselves have been graduating in vices and must possess many evil experiences'. Robison's remedial suggestions were not especially acute, except that he urged the Shaftesbury Reformatory be placed under the control of the same department as the Industrial Schools, and perhaps be co-ordinated in their working.

Stuart worked out his ideas on the question in two papers six weeks later,¹ one on 'Industrial Schools and Reformatories for Girls' and one on those for boys. Like Robison and so many others, he resisted the prison-style which pervaded even the girls industrial school. More important, he proposed that not only should the two types of schools be under the one department, but that a flexible system of committal be devised to allow promotion or reversion from one to the other. For the boys he wanted a real reformatory, not just the Vernon, and he believed this could best be provided by a farm. For all the children who might live in these institutions the hope of the premier was that they might find a way back into society, through the discipline, family care and real industrial training given them.

Out of these two minutes grew plans for the establishment of a reformatory for boys at Rookwood, on Crown land to the east of the cemetery and near the new

¹
C.S.M. 18595, ibid., 13 August 1883; they are quoted fully below, Appendix, nos. 2 and 3.
city water reservoir. The site was decided on by February 1884. £12,000 was put on the estimates for it, then dropped. Stuart made it plain, however, that the old loan vote of 1862, which Cowper had passed, would be sufficient authorisation for the funds he needed.

Perhaps stung by the implication that the Vernon was not doing its job, or perhaps drawn to support Stuart's arguments for the need of a reformatory, Neitenstein in his report for 1883-4 argued even more forcibly than before, that: 'whatever may be its name,...the ship has been for the last six or seven years gradually altering its character, and is now virtually a school for the reclamation of criminal boys'. Almost all the 109 committed during the year had previous convictions in the courts - one boy six times.

But the story of the Rookwood Boys' Reformatory became a curious tale of minutes, arguments, a little building and then nothing. The critical event was Stuart's stroke, reported in the press on 8 October 1884. Bede Dalley pressed on, utilising the 'cottage home'

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2. C.S.M. 18709, 1 February 1884, ibid.
4. In reply to a question in the Assembly from Hugh Taylor 11 March 1884. N.S.W.P.D. vol.12, p.2242.
5. L.C., J. vol.36 (1883-4) part iii, p.1275.
6. He was acting premier while Stuart was ill for most of 1885.
principle to guide the planners.¹ Twelve months later Stuart finally resigned.² In February 1886, the Inspector of Public Charities urged the new premier to continue work at Rookwood, where several cottages had been completed, as well as the kitchen blocks.³

The debate of August 1886 in the Legislative Assembly showed that attitudes were still confused. Parkes wanted to be informed what was going on at Rookwood, and took the opportunity to express his preference for a nautical industrial school. He could not possibly believe there were enough boys being dealt with under the Reformatories Act to justify the Rookwood project. But he also insisted that 'only guiltless children' were sent to the Vernon.⁴ Dibbs' reply showed that although he had read the files diligently, he was unwilling to commit his government to the completion of the scheme. Dry and cautious, lacking Parkes' grandly patronising manner, the social significance of the reformatory eluded him. If anything, he was willing to use the Wolverene as a nautical industrial school, and make the Vernon a reformatory.⁵ A minute by

¹ Minute 28 October 1884, quoted by Dibbs in Assembly debate on reformatory schools, 6 August 1886. N.S.W.P.D. vol.21, p.3866.
² Dibbs' ministry began on 7 October 1885.
⁴ N.S.W.P.D. vol.21, pp.3862-5 and 3869-70.
⁵ Ibid., pp.3865-9.
the Minister of Justice (J.P. Garvan) showed that such action was intended: Biloela was to be vacated; the Wolverene to replace the Vernon as an industrial school, while the latter was to be transferred to the Department of Justice as a boys reformatory. When Parkes returned to office in March 1887 the Rookwood scheme was decisively rejected: indeed the minute for cabinet from Parkes suggesting the cessation of the scheme was signed by all the eight cabinet members present in concurrence.

Others continued to press for a reformatory. Foster moved an urgency motion in October 1887. He quoted strong opinions from the Chief Justice, Sir George Innes (another member of the Supreme Court bench) and Mr Fitzhardinge, a Crown Prosecutor, all supporting the call for a reformatory. These lawyers all approached the problem from the difficulty they felt in committing young offenders to the common jail, and the misuse of the Industrial Schools Act and the Vernon which often resulted. However, Parkes once again denied the need for such an institution simply in terms of the numbers involved even when a member nettled him with the figures of children dealt with by the police courts.

1 Minute on Dept. of Justice memo 7 August 1886 in C.S.I.L. S.B. 4/901.1.
2 C.S.M. 19387, cabinet meeting 31 March 1887, ibid.
3 N.S.W.P.D. vol.28, p.678ff.
4 Ibid., p.684ff.
5 (Thompson). The figures quoted were 1883 - 169; 1884 - 144; 1885 - 126 (boys).
The masterly old politician damped the discussions down by doing nothing. Editorials did not have much effect,\(^1\) nor a deputation led by the Anglican Archbishop to the Minister of Justice,\(^2\) even if the latter could now speak of 'seventh class prisoners' who were being housed separately. Neitenstein made the point once more, this time to the Select Committee on the Children's Protection Bill in August 1891: all the boys on the Vernon were committed from the Police Courts, under the Industrial Schools Act.\(^3\) A memo from the Director of Charitable Institutions to the new premier (Dibbs)\(^4\) outlined a scheme for a shore reformatory which could provide for three classes of inmates, and a range of recreations as well as industrial pursuits. Obviously Dibbs was letting Maxted rethink, not just the construction of buildings but the principles of organisation and operation. At first it looked as though Rookwood would be used.\(^5\) But towards Christmas 1892 the needs of the asylums for the infirm and destitute became too great. Dibbs and Maxted kept at the problem of

\(^1\) S.M.H. 16 July 1889, 10 January 1891.

\(^2\) On 26 February 1891, reported S.M.H. 27th.


\(^4\) 1 December 1891, V. & P. 1894, vol.3, p.945.

\(^5\) S.M.H. 19 October 1892, reporting a remark of Dibbs in the Assembly.
providing a reformatory. A new site was found at Eastwood,¹ and with a revised outline scheme from Maxted to guide its officers,² the 'Carpentarian' Reformatory at Brush Farm, Eastwood, received its first boys in May 1895.³ From the beginning it was the reformatory's purpose to reclaim, to reform, to be a humane, socialising influence on the boys. Under Fred Stayner the institution seems to have fulfilled its task successfully. Meanwhile the State Children's Relief Board had, by administrative decision, established three 'probationary farm homes' by 1899 to provide at last, if only in a limited way, for the disciplining of recalcitrant State children whom it preferred not to turn over to the courts and the Department of Justice.⁴

The picture one obtains of care given to children who were falling within the definitions of the two Acts of 1866 is that there was a grave need for an overall review of the whole system. Legal process and institutional care was available, but within rigid categories, and with only a modicum of humane concern for the children involved. A major legislative and administrative effort was to transform this situation in the next few years.

² 21 February 1894, ibid.
4. Legislative protection

We have already considered the outburst of hostility to the desertion of new born children which was associated with the establishment of the Sydney Foundling Hospital. It became important, not only as a hospital for the urgent care of these infants, but also of other infants who with their mothers could find refuge there. The State Children's Relief Act, the efforts to improve the techniques of administering the Industrial Schools Act and the Reformatory Schools Act - these administrative improvements are evidence of a quickening concern for the welfare of children, especially in the rapidly growing but still unhealthy and dirty city of Sydney. There were the children of parents 'hopelessly drunken', with husbands assaulting wife and family.¹ There were ragged and vagrant children picked up by the police, runaways from their families, living in the open air.² There were the crowds of children inhabiting those back lanes with their parents in poverty.³

It is really pitiable to see the numbers of young children who, barefooted and ragged, infest our streets and accost the passers by with solicitations of matches etc. which, in many cases is neither more nor less than begging. It is well known that many of these children obtain considerable

1 E.g. the case of James Hourigan. B.S., H.C. 7 and 14 April 1885.
2 E.g. Anne Kirby, D.T. 17 October 1882.
3 Compare Plate VI.
sums in the course of the day, from the charitably disposed...[and that] their parents... live upon the children's "earnings" in the most heartless manner, keep them without boots and clothing and make them remain in the streets till a late hour at night, the little fellows often being afraid to go home unless they have obtained a certain sum, for fear of a beating....1

The question of the age of consent occasionally received attention. The Telegraph approved a lecture by the Reverend Charles Olden urging that the age be raised from 14 to 16 years, and that some process for reparation to violated girls be worked out. 2 Later in the 1880s the Benevolent Society's officers began to notice a sharp increase in the number of foundlings being found by the police, many of them, as usual, dead. Edward Maxted reported critically to his Society on the inefficiency of many midwives, and the dangers to which these illegitimate children were exposed. He urged them to seek legislation to prevent this outright abandonment of children. 3 Later the same year the term 'baby-farming' got into the press with the committal of a Mrs Batts on a charge of murder arising out of her mistreatment of an infant committed to her care for a consideration. 4

1 D.T. 1 August 1881.
2 5 August 1885.
3 B.S. to Col. Sec. 15 March 1889, enclosing Maxted's report. C.S.I.L. 89/3234.
4 Evening News 17 October 1889.
Edward Maxted continued his efforts to publicise the problems of child life in Sydney. He presented reports to the Benevolent Society in October 1890 on children received into the asylum, on families helped by the outdoor relief department, and on baby farming. That there were many children in Sydney living in filth and neglect was undeniable. The police were bringing pitiable cases to the asylum daily. The report on baby farming was even more distressing. Maxted reminded the Board, and the public - for the reports were intended for publication - that 32 foundlings had been left with the Society in 1889-90. He was convinced that the 'baby farming' traffic was rife. He described the technique by which infants were received from unwed mothers, for a fee, on the promise that a good foster home would be found for them. Sometimes this was done. The variations on this theme were that the foster parents were often left without any payment in support of the child, or worse, the infants were never even taken to foster parents but simply left in a room, neglected and unfed till they died. When these 'baby farmers' were also conducting lying-in homes, the whole business was obviously a deliberate conspiracy to exploit the unfortunate mothers. Given publicity by Maxted and the Benevolent Society, the matters were taken up by the Herald, in February 1891, calling for legislation to curb

1 S.M.H. 14 October 1890.
2 S.M.H. 12 February 1891. B.S., H.C. minutes for 13 October 1890 show both reports were presented at that meeting.
the worst excesses of this 'trade' and to control it rigorously. Already in Victoria a bill had become law in 1890 proscribing the keeping of children under two years for money and requiring inquests on the death of any sick children. The Victorian Crimes Act of the same year made neglect, ill-treatment and exposure of children a crime. ¹

In this context John Cash Neild ² took up infant protection, presenting a bill in the Legislative Assembly in the next session. He wished to make lump sum payments for the disposal of infants illegal; he proposed to regulate fostering arrangements; he called for the registration of all births, including stillbirths. The

² Lt Col the Honorable John Cash Neild (1846-1911), Senior Senator from New South Wales, as he was to become - or 'jawbone' Neild as he had been nicknamed, the free-trade supporter of Henry Parkes who opposed the Dibbs-Jennings government's Customs Duties bill in July 1886 with a marathon speech of nine hours - was a colourful, self-assured member of the Legislative Assembly. He represented Paddington from 1885 till 1900, save 1889-91, and was then Senator for New South Wales 1901-10. He was an insurance agent by profession. He found time to raise and command the St George's English Rifle Regiment (a volunteer unit). He served as Grand Master of the New South Wales Loyal Orange Lodge in 1891. His efforts on behalf of social reform (with a protestant flavour) are noticed in this thesis.

T. Kewley, in his 1947 article, reproduces a cartoon of him. There is a pen-and-ink portrait in Protestant Standard 14 February 1891, p.6. This reference I owe to Miss M. Rutledge.
bill drew much comment. The government soon announced it had prepared a bill to cover that which Neild had proposed and also the improper treatment of children.

The two bills were referred to a Select Committee of the Legislative Council. Before the Committee even more distressing details of baby-farming practices were retailed by Edward Maxted. He described advertisements of 'kind persons' offering to arrange foster care of children. He told of children he had found, 'packed away in boxes in an ill-ventilated underground room'. He urged that any persons conducting fostering operations should be licensed. Sydney Maxted, G.E. Ardill and E.W. Fosbery all produced further evidence of the mistreatment or virtual murder of children. Fosbery stated that there had been 11 inquests in 1890 and 13 in 1891 on abandoned infants.

The Chairman, Dr Creed, produced some remarkable examples of 'certificates' of stillbirths written by midwives. As if to underline the work of the Committee, another of Edward Maxted's reports was published just a few days after its report was tabled. In this report

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1. N.S.W.P.D. vol.52, p.758, 11 August 1891.
2. N.S.W.P.D. vol.53, p.1750, 16 September 1891.
5. q.647, 14 October 1891. He was Inspector General of Police.
6. The Select Committee's report was tabled 2 March 1892. E. Maxted's report on child and wife desertion to the B.S. was published by S.M.H. 9 March 1892.
Maxted concentrated his attention on the difficulty of dealing with the deserting husband, and on the suicides of deserted wives which sometimes resulted. The Children's Protection bill was introduced once more. It was a stronger, better organised bill, prohibiting baby farming, regulating fostering, providing protection for older children, requiring regulation of lying-in houses and the registration of stillbirths. Only in deleting the clause prohibiting the employment of children was the bill seriously amended. Richard O'Connor in arguing for this amendment, claimed that:

If we prevent children from performing or begging in the streets at night, we shall interfere with the means of livelihood of a good many poor people, and inflict harassing legislation upon them without very much benefit to the community....Why should children be interfered with while they are simply appealing in the ordinary way to the humanity and charity of passers by?¹

So the Children's Protection Act² prohibited the payment of a premium of more than £4 for fostering, and provided a machinery for registration and inspection of fostered

¹ N.S.W.P.D. vol.57, p.6579, 17 March 1892.
² 55 Vic., no.30, proclaimed for Sydney 14 August 1892.
children. The clause against neglect, ill-treatment and exposure was broad and powerful. There was power, too, for children so treated to be taken into protective custody, and to be committed to an institution (for example, Biloela).

Neild and many others, though pleased with this act, still believed there was much to do. A meeting 'for the Promotion of Public Morality' in July 1892 chaired by the Primate was reminded by Edward Maxted of the continuing high rate of illegitimacy and all its awful consequences. This dominantly protestant meeting commended Neild for his work and was in fact a demonstration of protestant support for social reform of the type Neild was advocating. His Vice Suppression bill which gained its second reading in October provided for the raising of the age of consent to 16 years and for dealing with brothels and other types of

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1 Clause 5:
If any person wilfully and without reasonable excuse neglects to provide adequate and proper food, nursing, clothing, medical aid or lodging for any child in his or her care or custody, or wilfully ill-treats or exposes any child, or causes or procures any child to be neglected, ill-treated or exposed, and if such neglect, ill-treatment or exposure has resulted, or appears likely to result in bodily suffering or permanent or serious injury... a conviction of 12 months was provided.

2 S.M.H. 22 July 1892.

3 N.S.W.P.D. vol. 60, p. 1368, 25 October 1892.
houses of ill repute. The Assembly was unwilling to do more than listen to the member for Paddington introduce the bill before they committed it to a select committee.

That 'baby farming' could lead to the worst excesses was shown by the Makin case. The Herald reported that five bodies were dug up from a backyard in Macdonaldtown in November 1892. During the week 15 decomposed bodies were exhumed from various locations. Their deaths were all sheeted home to the Makins, husband and wife. Both Mr and Mrs Makin were convicted of murder. The latter's death sentence was commuted to life, the former was hanged.

Less spectacular, but equally important, was the work of the State Children's Relief Department, which had been named the department responsible for administering the Children's Protection Act. Sydney Maxted reported that in the first year of operations 604 fostering arrangements were registered, and 59 lying-in houses. There were four prosecutions. Eighty-four of the children so fostered had since died. But he believed that the evil of baby farming had passed, and that children had a much better protection against neglect and mistreatment.

1 S.M.H. 5 November 1892.
2 S.M.H. 14 November 1892.
3 S.M.H. 24 July 1893 (ed.).
Neild was not completely satisfied. He attempted to amend the Act in 1894 to reduce the premium to £1 and to prohibit street trading by children.1 It was again referred to a select committee. He was successful in 1900.2 The original act was amended to include 'assaults' among the types of prohibited treatment of children; the employment of children under ten to sing, play, perform or sell was prohibited save by Ministerial permission; children between 10 and 14 (16 for girls) were required to cease their efforts at 10 p.m. Procuring children to beg was forbidden. The likelihood of danger was now made sufficient cause for children to be taken into custody by the police, and the State Children's Relief Board was named as an Institution to which children could be committed by the courts.3

By the turn of the century then, there was an increased willingness to protect children from the excesses of violence, disease and crime which threatened them. The work of the State Children's Relief Department was fast growing. It had a paid staff of 69 and an expenditure of £62,615 in 1900, with 7,101 children under supervision in all sections of its

1 N.S.W.P.D. vol.69, p.836, 20 February 1894.
2 N.S.W.P.D. vol.106, p.3954ff, 16 October 1900 (Second Reading).
3 Children's Protection Act Amendment Act no.52 of 1900.
work.¹ But the options available to government authority or simple private charity for the care of children were still confusing, overlapping and inefficient. Much emphasis continued to be placed on the work of the police and the petty courts. Much had been gained in involving so much community support for State children through the boarding out system. The underprivileged children of the community - if this modern term of social comment can be used - were still provided for in an uncertain and chancy way. Yet in the creation of the State Children's Relief Department and in the passing of the Children's Protection Act a new, dynamic approach to child care had begun to make its mark.