

Christian Brothers book a whitewash — VOICES

THE book *The Scheme — The Christian Brothers and Childcare in Western Australia*, has been called a whitewash by those battling for justice from the Catholic Church.

Written by Dr Barry Coldrey, the book was commissioned by the Christian Brothers in response to several biographies that have left the brothers smarting from allegations of cruelty, child labour scams and sexual abuse.

The biographies, written by former inmates of the brothers' child-care institutions at Clontarf, Tardun, Bindoon and Castledare, reveal that some children were sadly abused by a

system entrusted to care for them.

Many went through the system unscathed, but for many others, a childhood dogged by abuse has left permanent scars that will never heal.

One of those men is Kewdale author Lionel Welsh who is seeking justice for cruelty he says he suffered when he was brought to Australia from England as a boy and became a resident at Bindoon.

Mr Welsh said he was told by the church in England he was an orphan.

He later found out he had a mother, father and other relatives in Britain.

Como publisher Bruce Blyth heads the Victims of Institutionalised Cruelty and Supporters (VOICES) group

fighting for compensation and criminal charges to be brought against offenders.

He said the first indication of a whitewash in the book was the photographs, many of which show happy smiling boys with a benign brother.

"We do not see any boys slaving on a scaffold with bare feet that are covered in burns from lime," he said.

"There are plenty of those photographs available. I have seen them."

Mr Blyth said he had a letter from Dr Coldrey admitting that he knew of a brother who had forced a boy to sleep with him on many occasions.

"This is not in the book," Mr Blyth said.

"Can the public believe this book is unbiased when it was commissioned by the brothers and written by a brother?"

VOICES will continue to fight for the prosecution of the brothers despite Director of Public Prosecutions John McKechnie's decision not to pursue 16 cases against the brothers because the events took place 40 years ago and individual allegations lacked corroboration.

Mr Blyth said this was only the first refusal.

"We are about two years behind Canada. People there eventually got what they wanted — we'll keep fighting," he said.

Research took months

DR BARRY Coldrey, a professional historian and researcher, has written 20 books including several on child migration to Australia.

The Scheme — The Christian Brothers and Childcare in Western Australia gives details of the founding of the order in Ireland in 1802 for the education of poor boys.

The brothers came to WA in 1868. By 1873, they were invited to manage the Catholic boys in the care of a Subiaco orphanage.

This offer was only accepted in 1897. Clontarf Orphanage in Manning was established in 1902.

The three other institutions were gradually formed so that by the start of World War II, the

brothers were a formidable force in the care of orphaned children.

Rich in detail, the book deals with controversial issues in the wider history of the orphanages.

Dr Coldrey spent months researching allegations made by former orphans and was told by the brothers to delete names of certain abusers. He did this against his own wishes.

His research concluded that in 1920, only one brother, F.P. Carmody, had been formally charged, tried and convicted of crimes while serving at the orphanages.

He said there was strong evidence that five brothers were multiple offenders.

Four of those men are dead. The

fifth left years ago and was not asked to help with the investigation.

Six other brothers also admitted an offence with a teenager.

Several other brothers were suspected of abusing their position of trust.

Christian Brothers have acknowledged that some abuses have taken place.

A public apology has been made to the men who have suffered. Counselling programmes have been initiated.

An independent advisory panel, with funds provided by the brothers, is currently assessing the needs of men who were former residents of the four institutions and need help.