



Introduction

War Refugee Children, Humanitarianism and Transnationalism

In November 1919, the *Adelaide Advertiser* reported that, among the Australian troops who had disembarked from the warship *Port Sydney* returning from the theatre of war, was a Belgian boy. Described as a 'diminutive figure', dressed in an Australian military uniform, the twelve-year-old became known as Albert. It was reported that his father had been killed while serving in the Belgian army and his mother had died of starvation, and that an Australian soldier, Private George Leahy, had 'adopted' him. Albert was referred to as a 'war waif'.¹ After being snatched from the battlefields of Europe, Albert Dussart remained in Australia for the rest of his life. Leahy had, according to these reports, stuffed him in his chaff bag and brought him to Australia. Tasmanian newspaper the *World* reported that the story 'is surely one of the most human and touching that the whole of the war has produced'.²

About six months earlier, another boy, this time from France, had also been smuggled into Australia. On board the troopship, *Karagola*, which returned to Melbourne in June 1919, was thirteen-year-old Jean Berthe. Berthe had been found by Australian soldiers on the battlefield of the Somme in 1918. Australian soldier Private Robert Simpson believed the boy should not be left behind and he travelled with Australian soldiers until he arrived in Australia, when Simpson took Berthe into his family in Gippsland. He became a fisherman, a footballer and government employee in his local community. Twelve-year-old Honoré Hemene, nicknamed Henri or the 'Digger', was another boy who experienced the same fate. This time it was air mechanic Tom Tovell and his brother Ted who smuggled Henri on board the RMS *Kaisar-i-Hind*, putting him into a sack, and taking him to the Tovell family farm northwest of Brisbane. He grew up with the family, but died tragically in a car accident in 1928.

These stories are well documented and, in the case of Hemene and Berthe, full-length books have been written about them. In the retelling of these

¹ *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 14 November 1919, 7; *West Australian*, 5 November 1919, 8.

² *World* (Hobart), 20 November 1919, 8.

events, the kindness of the soldiers has been celebrated and a humanitarian spirit identified that motivated saving these war orphans.³

In what amounted in each case to child abduction, theft and smuggling, the Australian authorities succumbed to popular opinion and sentiment: it did not challenge the soldiers' actions and allowed each of the returned servicemen to adopt the orphaned boys. These acts were unanimously embraced by the Australian community at the time as humanitarian, reflecting the theme of 'saving' children in war which was so prevalent during and at the end of the First World War. The impact of the First World War on children was severe, immediate and profound. In Serbia, a nation defeated by Austria, the flight of both civilians and soldiers led to half a million refugees leaving the country and dispersing throughout Europe. The Serbian Relief Fund, in particular, was central to bringing refugee children into Britain. Belgium also experienced a vast exodus of refugees, as did Russia and Armenia, where children have especially been the focus of study.⁴ During the war, more than 50,000 Belgian children were part of a mass exodus after Germany's invasion of Belgium. Serbian refugee children joined civilians and soldiers who left Serbia after invasion.⁵ Far away from the European theatre of war, Australia appeared a distant, remote but safe haven for child war refugees.

Throughout the twentieth century and across many wars, Australia would be seen in this way, and many efforts were made to bring war refugee children to Australia. It was only after 1945, with Australia's newly devised migration policy, that children arrived in large numbers. But the history of Australia's relationship with child refugees begins well before post-war migration, through the myriad of humanitarian and international organisations that sought to offer support to the children and the individual Australians who became advocates for their cause and sought to act on their behalf.

The Humanitarians: War Child Refugees, Australian Humanitarianism in a Transnational World 1919–1975, begins with the formation of the Save the Children Fund in 1919 and ends with humanitarian interventions during the Vietnam War. This longitudinal study spans six decades to map the national and international humanitarian efforts undertaken by Australians on behalf of child refugees. This examination is framed by conceptualisations of the history of emotions, and the limits as well as the possibilities afforded by empathy and

³ See Anthony Hill, *Young Digger* (Ringwood: Penguin, 2016; first published 2002); Sandra A. Hargreaves, *Jean Berthe – The Quiet Frenchman* (Sandra A. Hargreaves, Bairnsdale: 2018).

⁴ Peter Gatrell, 'Europe on the Move: Refugees and World War I', *World War One*, British Library website, bl.uk/world-war-one/articles/refugees-europe-on-the-move, 2014, accessed June 2021.

⁵ Tony Kushner, 'Serbian Child Refugees in the First World War', *20th and 21st Century Migrations*, Our Migration Story: The Making of Britain website, www.ourmigrationstory.org.uk/oms/serbian-refugees-in-the-first-world-war, n.d., accessed June 2021.

compassion; gender history and women's role as international commentators through their work with children; biographical studies of unknown, and yet significant, humanitarian workers and the style of their humanitarian practice; and the traumatic experience of international humanitarian work itself. It explores the shifting forms and understandings of humanitarian activity related to war refugee children over the twentieth century, such as child sponsorship; the establishment of orphanages; fundraising as well as anti-humanitarianism; aid and development schemes; and campaigns for inter-country adoption. Based on previously unused records, letters and archival materials, this book brings together unexamined histories to chart the multilayered intersections between child refugees, humanitarianism and transnationalism.

The case study of Australia and the transnational intersection with the world, including both Europe and Asia, presents a unique prism through which to explore the significant and dramatic change over this time of the historical meanings of humanitarianism and transnationalism. Over the first part of the twentieth century, it captures shifts across the British Empire and Australia's ongoing imperial ties and examines these links. The interwar years show activities both dependent and independent of imperial connections, given Australian humanitarians distinctive response to the Armenian genocide (1915–1923) and the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939). After the Second World War (1939–1945), Australia's central role in the Asia region gave rise to concepts of social justice and humanitarian rights, which were shaped by views of the adoption of child refugees, especially those from the Korean War (1950–1953) and Vietnam War (1955–1975). The focus of this work is on humanitarians. One of the major aims is to discuss the experience, views and perspectives of humanitarians working on behalf of child refugees across four civil wars as well as the two world wars within one overarching narrative. Despite the Declaration of the Rights of the Child announced through the League of Nations in 1924, and again, in the revised version in 1959 through the United Nations, concepts of the rights of children rarely entered their lexicon. Their actions were made possible because the child was viewed as vulnerable, innocent, without agency or empowerment. These views underpinned their approach and were reflected in the programmes they adopted and in the acts they took, an examination of which is the basis of this book.

My aim is to present humanitarianism and transnationalism not as given, *a priori* categories but rather as dynamic, shifting historically contingent constructs defined by context, time and place. Towards this end, the study is structured around four key concepts relating to the history of children and war: saving, evacuating, assimilating and adopting. These categories overlap and intersect across time, but each provides a broad framework within which to explore the shifting nature of how child refugees were perceived and the most effective humanitarian interventions to assist them. The biographical

frame allows for the role of women in particular to be centrally situated within this story, and the efforts by many women on behalf of children are documented here for the first time.

Further, the present work offers an innovative perspective on the aftermath of war, especially in terms of children and their relationship to a country like Australia. By examining its short- and long-term impacts and the ideologies that shift over time in relation to children and war, *The Humanitarians* draws together a wider canvas, examining the influence of ideas about the welfare of child refugees in shaping broader political questions related to migration, race, ethnicity and gender. While the symbol of the child garnered universal support, there were of course, limits to this unifying image for vulnerable children when the state and governments mobilised for war. This was an inherent contradiction of support in certain times, but then dramatic, and even cruel, abandonment during periods of conflict.

Limits to the scope and scale of humanitarianism and transnationalism were imposed by the ubiquitous White Australia policy, which dominated and pervaded twentieth-century politics in Australia. The *Immigration Restriction Act* of 1901 introduced the White Australia policy to keep Australia 'white' and British, aspiring to 'racial purity'. The policy aimed particularly to exclude non-Europeans through the use of a dictation test, whereby entry depended on an immigrant writing fifty words in any European language as directed by the immigration officer. The policy defined Australian efforts to limit migration and ensure British imperial values continued to be promoted and advanced. The migration policy after the Second World War prioritised national groups, preferring those from Britain and Nordic countries to those from Southern Europe, who were deemed less desirable, in an explicit hierarchy of racial preferences. This long history of the Australian White imaginary was forged through settler-colonialism, which is based on racialised hierarchies designed to build a White Australia through the violent enslavement of Indigenous Australians. This internal narrative bleeds into discrediting those not deemed White coming into the country. This book spans the initiation and duration of the White Australia policy and its settler-colonial underpinnings, and it ends just as the policy was beginning to be dismantled in 1975.⁶

⁶ See Ann Curthoys and Jessie Mitchell, *Taking Liberty: Indigenous Rights and Settler Self-Government in Colonial Australia, 1830–1890* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Gwenda Tavan, *The Long, Slow Death of White Australia* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2005); Kama Maclean, *British India, White Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2020); Peter Cochrane, *Best We Forget: The War for White Australia, 1914–1918* (Melbourne: Text, 2018).

The White Australia policy is experienced and referenced in various ways in this book. It is articulated as a celebration of British imperial whiteness which informed humanitarian campaigns during the interwar period. During the Second World War it is explicitly manifest in the contrasting racialised treatments by government authorities of Jewish refugee children and British evacuees to Australia. In the post-war period and during the period of assimilation of the 1950s–1970s, becoming Australian was conflated with the adoption of Anglocentric values. When humanitarian efforts were extended to appeals abroad, these reflected racial anxieties and a Western imaginary of cultural superiority. By definition, understandings of humanitarianism as a practice and theory, and transnationalism across the century were selective and contested given the prevalence of the White Australia policy.

But the relationship between humanitarian interventions and the White Australia policy could also be complicated. At times, humanitarians did challenge the White Australia policy in efforts to increase numbers of children entering into Australia and defy restrictions on the basis of race, paradoxically by arguing that child immigrants would enhance and strengthen White Australia rather than threaten or challenge the policy itself. This argument was mounted by humanitarians for the entry of Armenian, Spanish, Jewish, Japanese and Vietnamese refugee children from each of the respective conflicts that created forced displacement. It was argued that the first three were considered white 'enough', while in the case of the last two, assimilation into Australian culture and society could be assured, especially for children borne of Australian soldiers. For all the post-war narratives around fundraising support for causes of humanitarianism, human rights and humanitarian rights in which Australia engaged, these narratives became much more circumscribed when direct migration to Australia was discussed.

Relatedly, a White Australia not only defined global outlooks but also was celebrated within the nation state. While this book is focused on the wars in Europe and Asia as a way of exploring transnationalism and humanitarianism throughout the twentieth century in response to these global conflicts, many of the themes discussed resonate profoundly in Australia with regard to Indigenous Australians. Only a few of the humanitarians explored in the book drew direct parallels between refugee children from global conflicts and the violent displacement and dispossession of Indigenous Australians. Chapter 2 discusses the work of Ernest and Mary Bryce, who saw the plight of Indigenous Australians as similar to that of victims of the Armenian genocide. Chapter 4 describes how the Indigenous Elder and Yorta Yorta man William Cooper protested in 1938 against the genocide of Jews, drawing a direct and explicit connection with the plight of his own First Nations peoples. In the era of assimilation after 1945, efforts to impose racial homogeneity extended to both Indigenous Australians and recently arrived immigrants. The Save the Children Fund in Australia, led by a former First World War nurse, Florence

Grylls, saw the fund's mission as including both Indigenous and recently arrived 'New Australians' as part of the same assimilationist endeavours. The assumption that Australia was a land of unoccupied wide open spaces where refugees could be resettled denied the reality that such land had been inhabited for tens of thousands of years and had never been ceded by Indigenous Australians.

Humanitarians often mobilised support for their cause couched not in political or cultural terms, but in emotive language especially in relation to children – and was cast as apolitical. To explore the enduring narrative of emotional humanitarian appeals, I position this study within historian Barbara Rosenwein's concept of 'emotional communities'. In Rosenwein's configuration, emotional communities resemble social communities, with the main difference being that the researcher seeks:

above all to uncover systems of feeling: what these communities (and the individuals within them) define and assess as valuable or harmful to them; the evaluations that they make about others' emotions; the nature of the affective bonds between people that they recognise; and the modes of emotional expression that they expect, encourage, tolerate and deplore.⁷

I have constructed the humanitarians and their organisations discussed in this book as emotional communities, arguing that a focus specifically on children, refracted through the four categories of saving, evacuating, assimilating and adopting, created particular communities that sought to share similar expression, sentiments, practices and actions. My contention is that a focus on refugee children in each of these categories sought to connect the humanitarian community together in historically specific ways. While the historiography on humanitarianism has of course noted the emotive appeals of humanitarians, the 'systems of feeling' between them, and around child refugees, and how this unites them – it also fragments them. Invariably, emotive responses are constructed within the organisations they form, such as the Save the Children Fund (SCF), International Social Service (1924–), UNICEF (1946–), PLAN (1937–) – or programmes such as Youth Aliyah or Children's Overseas Reception Board. But individuals and groups outside these larger organisations were also drawn together through an emotive response – especially towards humanitarian campaigns for orphans of war in, for instance, Korea and Vietnam. Framing communities of humanitarians as emotional communities in this study makes it distinctive from other histories of humanitarianism. The focus in the historiographies has been on emotional campaigns – and this is crucial. But I want to emphasise here that many of these organisations coalesced around what could be characterised as

⁷ Barbara Rosenwein, 'Worrying about Emotions in History', *American Historical Review*, 107:3 (June 2002), 842.

emotional communities that bound humanitarians to each other *within* their organisations as well as connecting them to the wider public to whom they appealed in emotive terms.

The compelling nature of emotional communities also suggests the appeal of these organisations, why humanitarians committed themselves to them, and the longevity of some of them. I argue that, in the context of this study, humanitarians construct 'emotional communities' in ways that neutralise the politics of war-child humanitarianism, reducing it to emotive responses rather than critiques of power, structures and oppression. Moreover, while these communities may have shared some characteristics, they were not at all uniform, nor was there a template for them. At times, emotional communities were manifested through specific acts, at other times in rhetoric, narratives or discourse. Often, they were to be found in a combination of both actions and words. Sometimes they were articulated in overt and explicit terms, while in other moments they took shape implicitly, woven deep within the tapestry of events, policies and ideology. I have attempted to apply the term as a consistently productive concept to capture the diverse and multifaceted articulation of such communities within humanitarianism from the early to late twentieth century.

One commonality emotional communities did share, whatever the complexion or constitution, was that such communities were transnational in nature. As many scholars have shown, humanitarian communities across the globe and throughout the twentieth century were characterised by their global mobility and circulation. Like their counterparts elsewhere, Australian humanitarians travelled extensively and repeatedly, many of them taking Australian perspectives into the global community, and then returning to Australia with ideas, concepts, language and causes that they promoted and disseminated within their organisations and in wider communities. A specific transnational frame of reference allows for an exploration of the ways in which many of the figures in this book, and especially women, became spokespersons for an international cause and political positions on the conflicts in which they engaged. It also allows for a focus to be placed on new voices to be unearthed, and practices to be examined in new ways.⁸

To capture these aspects, I have approached this topic through a biographical lens as one way of capturing lesser-known activists and tracing shifts in the very practice of humanitarian endeavour and intervention. Recent scholarship on humanitarianism and transnationalism has called for a fuller study of lesser-known activists to consider humanitarianism *in action* and *in situ* rather than continue to focus on well-known figures, such as Dorothy Buxton,

⁸ Marilyn Lake and Ann Curthoys, *Connected Worlds: History in Transnational Perspective* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2005).

Eglantyne Jebb from Britain, and Karen Jeppe from Denmark, and others who have cast a long shadow over the history of twentieth-century humanitarianism. Drawing attention to neglected figures can throw into relief how humanitarianism was intimately linked to transnationalism and to its adaptability over time. But it can also capture the gendered nature of the historical *practice* of humanitarian work, and how this was manifest and undertaken. It takes up the challenge presented by scholars working in women's history and gender history, highlighting women's role in humanitarianism for more than a century.⁹

An examination across time captures a generation whose connection to humanitarianism and transnationalism was formed, I would argue, during the First World War, which then continued throughout the twentieth century. This book amplifies historian Bruno Cabanes's argument that the First World War gave rise to the origins of twentieth-century humanitarianism.¹⁰ It moves chronologically beyond this, demonstrating that a longitudinal perspective reflects how humanitarianism endured long after the first decade following the First World War, into a Second World War and, in the case of some humanitarians, beyond it. This study also suggests that this legacy was not static or fixed, and, as we shall see, it endured in the case of the Save the Children Fund, which unlike many humanitarian organisations, was adaptable in its approach to how to save children and kept the cause relevant to contemporary times.

In relation to the broader scholarship, this work is positioned within the expanding field of the history of humanitarianism in the twentieth century, which draws on the work of political scientists and historians Michael Barnett, Bruno Cabanes, Peter Gatrell, Joanne Laycock, Johannes Pulman, Andrew Thompson, Keith Watenpugh, Richard Wilson and Richard Brown – to name a few – to construct the wider contextual and historical developments across the twentieth century.¹¹ On humanitarianism and children, especially

⁹ Esther Möller, Johannes Paulmann and Katharina Stornig (eds.), *Gendering Global Humanitarianism in the Twentieth Century* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

¹⁰ Bruno Carbanes, *The Great War and the Origins of Humanitarianism, 1918–1924* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

¹¹ See, for example, the following texts (this is not an exhaustive list): Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011); Bruno Cabanes, *The Great War*; Keith David Watenpugh, *Bread From Stones: The Middle East and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015); Jo Laycock, *Imagining Armenia: Orientalism, Ambiguity and Intervention, 1879–1925* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009); Michelle Tusan, *The British Empire and the Armenian Genocide: Humanitarianism and Imperial Politics from Gladstone to Churchill* (London: IB Tauris, 2017); Gerald Steinacher, *Humanitarians at War: The Red Cross in the Shadow of the Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Richard Ashby Wilson and Richard D. Brown (eds.),

relevant to this study is the extensive work of historians Emily Baughan, Lindsey Dodd, Laura Lee Downs, Kevin Myers, Julia Torrie and Tara Zahra, all of whom have explored the experiences of European children in wartime and, especially, evacuations.¹² This study also expands on the history of the evacuation of refugee children, such as on the Youth Aliyah movement, which has so far attracted too little scholarly attention but was pivotal in marshalling support for the cause of evacuating Jewish children during the Second World War.¹³

Humanitarianism and Suffering: The Mobilisation of Empathy, Ashby Wilson and Richard D. Brown (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Johannes Paulman (ed.), *Dilemmas of Humanitarian Aid in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Peter Gatrell, *Free World? The Campaign to Save the World's Refugees 1956–1963* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Andrew Thompson, 'Humanitarian Interventions, Past and Present', in Fabian Klose (ed.), *The Emergence of Humanitarian Intervention: Ideas and Practice from the Nineteenth Century to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Andrew Thompson, 'Humanitarian Principles Put To the Test: Challenges to Humanitarian Action during Colonisation', *International Review of the Red Cross*, 97:897/898 (2016), 45–76; Andrew S. Thompson, 'Unravelling the Relationships between Humanitarianism, Human Rights, and Decolonisation: Time for a Radical Rethink?', in Martin Thomas and Andrew S. Thompson (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of the Ends of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 454–73.

¹² Emily Baughan, 'Every Citizen of Empire Implored to Save the Children!: Empire, Internationalism and the Save the Children Fund in Inter-war Britain', *Historical Research*, 86:231 (2012), 116–37; Emily Baughan, 'The Imperial War Relief Fund and the All British Appeal: Commonwealth, Conflict and Conservatism within the British Humanitarian Movement, 1920–1925', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 40:5 (December 2012), 845–61; Emily Baughan and Juliano Fiori, 'Save the Children, the Humanitarian Project, and the Politics of Solidarity: Reviving Dorothy Buxton's Vision', *Disasters*, 39:Suppl 2 (2015), 129–45; Emily Baughan, 'Anglo-American Diplomacy and International Adoption, c. 1918–1925', *Past & Present*, 239:1 (2018), 181–217; Tara Zahra, *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families after World War II* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); Kevin Myers, 'History, Migration and Childhood: Basque Refugee Children in 1930s Britain', *Family and Community History*, 3:2 (2000), 147–57; Kevin Myers, 'The Ambiguities of Aid and Agency: Representing Refugee Children in England, 1937', *Cultural and Social History*, 6:1 (2009), 29–46; Lindsey Dodd, 'Wartime Rupture and Reconfiguration in French Family Life: Experience and Legacy', *History Workshop Journal*, 88 (Autumn 2019), 134–52; Julia S. Torrie, *'For Their Own Good': Civilian Evacuations in Germany and France, 1939–1945* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010); Laura Lee Downs, *'Au Revoir les Enfants': Wartime Evacuation and the Politics of Childhood in Britain and France, 1939–1940*, *History Workshop Journal*, 82:1 (Autumn 2016), 122–50; Lindsey Dodd, *French Children under the Allied Bombs, 1940–1945: An Oral History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

¹³ Dvora Hacohen, 'British Immigration Policy to Palestine in the 1930s: Implications for Youth Aliyah', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 37:4 (October 2001), 206.

The other historiographies this study integrates relate to histories of the methods of humanitarian relief,¹⁴ as well as the scholarship on women and humanitarian campaigns, and the demand for the exploration of unknown humanitarians.¹⁵ The psychological impact of the experiences of war on children requires further analysis and this book builds on existing insights.¹⁶ Organisations such as UNICEF are also a focus, but with a distinctive perspective on Australia's involvement,¹⁷ as with the history of inter-country adoption.¹⁸ Issues of human rights as a concept emerged in the post-1945 period and also provides the backdrop for current work, as does the debate on the history of human rights, children's rights and humanitarian rights.¹⁹

¹⁴ Henry D. Molumphy, *For Common Decency: The History of Foster Parents Plan, 1937–1983* (Rhode Island: Foster Parents Planning, 1984); Hans Dijsselbloem, Justin Fugle and Uwe Gnetting, 'Child Sponsorship and Rights-Based Interventions at Plan: Tensions and Synergies', in Brad Watson and Matthew Clarke (eds.), *Child Sponsorship: Exploring Pathways to a Brighter Future* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 113–22.

¹⁵ Enrico Dal Lago and Kevin O'Sullivan, 'Review Article: Prosopographies, "Transnational Lives, and Multiple Identities in Global Humanitarianism', *Moving the Social*, 57 (2017), 159–74. See also, Jessica Reinisch, 'Introduction: Agents of Internationalism', *Contemporary European History*, 25:2 (2011), 195–205; Siân Roberts, "'I Promised Them That I Would Tell England about Them": A Woman Teacher's Activist's Life in Popular Humanitarian Education', *Paedagogica Historica*, 47:1–2 (2011), 155–72; Laura E. Brade and Rose Holmes, 'Troublesome Sainthood: Nicholas Winton and the Contested History of Child Rescue in Prague, 1938–1940', *History and Memory*, 29:1 (Spring–Summer 2017), 3–40.

¹⁶ James S. M. Rusby and Fiona Tasker, 'Long-Term Effects of the British Evacuation of Children during World War 2 on Their Adult Mental Health', *Aging & Mental Health*, 13:3 (May 2009), 391–404; W. M. Burbury, 'Effects of Evacuation and of Air Raids on City Children', *British Medical Journal*, 8 November 1941, 660–2; F. Bodman, 'War Conditions and the Mental Health of the Child', *British Medical Journal*, 4 October 1941, 486–8; E. Glover, 'Notes on the Psychological Effects of War Conditions on the Civilian Population', part iii, 'The "Blitz" – 1940–41', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 23 (1942), 2–37.

¹⁷ Jennifer M. Morris, *The Origins of UNICEF, 1946–1953* (New York: Lexington Books, 2015).

¹⁸ Denise Cuthbert, Ceridwen Spark and Kate Murphy, "'That Was Then, But This Is Now": Historical Perspectives on Inter-country Adoption and Domestic Child Adoption in Australian Public Policy', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 23:3 (September 2010), 430; Peter Fopp, 'Inter-country Adoption: Australia's Position', *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 17:1 (March 1982), 50–61.

¹⁹ Jan Eckel and Samuel Moyn (eds.), *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); Steven L. B. Jensen, *The Making of International Human Rights: The 1960s, Decolonisation and the Reconstruction of Global Values* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Jay Winter and Antoine Prost, *Rene Cassin and Human Rights: From the Great War to the Universal Declaration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Akira Iriye, Petra Goedde and William I. Hitchcock (eds.), *The Human*

Within the Australian historical context, the intersections that form the basis of this study have so far remained largely unexplored. The most significant work on Australian humanitarianism has been undertaken by historians Melanie Oppenheimer through her work on the Australian Red Cross, and Vicken Babkenian on Armenian relief efforts.²⁰ This is a gap I have sought to correct through my own publications on Australian humanitarian movements,²¹ which are positioned within the wider histories of the White Australia policy, race, assimilation, development studies, human rights,

Rights Revolution: An International History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Roland Burke, *Decolonisation and the Evolution of International Human Rights* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); 6–8, 11; Stefan-Ludwig Hoffman, 'Human Rights and History', *Past and Present*, 232:1 (August 2016), 279–310.

²⁰ Melanie Oppenheimer, 'A Golden Moment? The League of Red Cross Societies, the League of Nations and Contested Spaces of Internationalism and Humanitarianism, 1919–22', in Joy Damousi and Patricia O'Brien (eds.), *League of Nations: Impact, Legacy, History* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2018), 8–27; Vicken Babkenian, 'Australian Women and the Armenian Relief Movement', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, 101:2 (2015), 111–33; Vicken Babkenian, 'An SOS from Beyond Gallipoli: Victoria and the Armenian Relief Movement', *Victorian Historical Journal*, 81:2 (2010), 250–76; Vicken Babkenian, 'A Humanitarian Journey: The Reverend James Edwin Cresswell and the Armenian Relief Fund', *Journal of the South Australian Historical Society*, 37 (2009), 61–75.

²¹ See Joy Damousi, 'Humanitarianism and Child Refugee Sponsorship: The Spanish Civil War and the Global Campaign of Esme Odgers', *Journal of Women's History*, 32:1 (Spring 2020), 111–34; Joy Damousi, 'World Refugee Year 1959–1960: Humanitarian Rights in Post-war Australia', *Australian Historical Studies*, 51:2 (2020), 212–227; Joy Damousi, 'From Charity to Justice: The Australian Foster Parents Plan and Humanitarian Aid in Asia in the 1970s', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 65:4 (2019), 549–65; Joy Damousi, '"Out of Common Humanity": Humanitarianism, Compassion and Efforts to Assist Jewish Refugees in the 1930s', *Australian Historical Studies*, 50:1 (2019), 81–98; Joy Damousi, 'The Campaign for Japanese-Australian Children to Enter Australia, 1957–1968: A History of Post-War Humanitarianism', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 64:2 (2018), 211–26; Joy Damousi, 'Mothers in War: "Responsible Mothering", Children and the Prevention of Violence in Twentieth Century War', *History and Theory*, 56:4 (December 2017), 119–34; Joy Damousi, 'Building "Healthy Happy Family Units": Aileen Fitzpatrick and Reuniting Greek Children Separated by the Greek Civil War with Their Families in Australia, 1949–1954', *Journal of the History of the Family*, 22:4 (2017), 446–84; Joy Damousi, '"An Appeal from Afar": The Challenges of Compassion and the Australian Humanitarian Campaigns for Armenian Relief, 1900–1930', in Joanne Laycock and Francesca Piana (eds.), *Aid to Armenia* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020); Joy Damousi, 'Australian League of Nations Union and War Refugees: 1930–1939', in Joy Damousi and Patricia O'Brien (eds.), *League of Nations: Impact, Legacy, History* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2018), 28–45.

immigration and refugees within Australia and abroad.²² These are disparate but related historiographies, which this study brings together with a focus on child refugees. The present study reorients these historiographies, as well as exploring the ways in which a concern with child refugees can illuminate wider social, political and cultural issues, as demonstrated in the following outline of the book's chapters.

Part I: Saving – 1920s and 1930s

The concept of 'saving' children in war permeated the discussions of the plight of children after the First World War, drawing on sentimental images of vulnerable children propagated by organisations such as Save the Children. But the notion of saving was manifest in many ways. It is argued that the notion of saving refugee children had implications for wider politics relating to the colonies of the British Empire and imperial politics, and the White Australia policy and domestic politics, and relates to the way in which speaking on behalf of refugee children allowed women to become commentators in international affairs on a scale unprecedented to that time. 'Saving' the child held universal appeal, but it was a pervasive symbol of national and international politics that allowed women internationalists a political platform.

Chapter 1 explores the campaigns of Cecilia John, Meredith Atkinson and the Save the Children Fund, which in Australia was formed in 1919. John established an Australian branch after attending the Women's International Peace Congress in Zurich in 1919 with feminist Vida Goldstein, where she witnessed the horror of images of starving children in Europe, which left an indelible impact on her. A biographical study of John provides a framework

²² Gwenda Tavan, *The Long, Slow Death of White Australia* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2005); Catriona Elder, "'Diggers' Waifs": Desire, Anxiety and Immigration in Post-1945 Australia', *Australian Historical Studies*, 38:130 (2007), 261–78; Patrick Kilby, *NGOs and Political Change: A History of the Australian Council for International Development* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2015); Maggie Black, *A Cause for Our Time: Oxfam the First Fifty Years* (London: Oxfam Publishing, 1992); Susan Blackburn, *Practical Visionaries: A Study of Community Aid Abroad* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1993); Agnieszka Sobocinska, 'A New Kind of Mission: The Volunteer Graduate Scheme and the Cultural History of International Development', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 62:3 (2016), 369–387; David Lowe, 'Australia's Colombo Plans, Old and New: International Students as Foreign Relations', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 21:4 (2015), 448–62; Jon Piccini, *Human Rights in Twentieth Century Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Anna Haebich, *Spinning the Dream: Assimilation in Australia 1950–1970* (Fremantle, Western Australia: Fremantle Press, 2008); Klaus Neumann, *Across the Seas: Australia's Response to Refugees: A History* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2015); James Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera: The Story of Australian Immigration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

through which to bring together disparate parts of her life that have been studied in isolation. Previously, her national and international efforts have been discussed separately. Integrating these studies has revealed, I argue, not a continuum of political ideals but contradictions. During the First World War, John critiqued the British Empire for draining the blood of Australia's men on the battlefields of Europe, but after the war, she eulogised the Empire for rescuing starving and destitute children through Save the Children. She appears not to bring these politics into Save the Children, however, focusing instead on the desperate plight of starving children in an apolitical framework. The emotive, apolitical appeal of rescuing starving children seemingly sat without the complications of her earlier proclamations. Privileging sentimentality in the cause of destitute children, void of political or critical analysis, was a challenge the journalist and educator Meredith Atkinson encountered too as he attempted to promote the cause of Russian children caught up in the civil war.

Chapter 2 focuses on the Armenian Relief Fund and the Armenian Australasian Orphanage in Antilyas, in modern-day Lebanon. Children are rarely identified as the agents of change in international diplomacy, but during the immediate post-war period, the plight of the children was viewed as vital to the Armenian Relief Fund, created in 1915. This organisation defined Australian internationalism and humanitarianism during the interwar years. The Australasian Orphanage was established in 1923 and supported by the Near East Relief Fund in collaboration with American humanitarians. The Orphanage was a direct way to promote saving the refugees, and the campaign attracted significant support in Australia. The leading figures of this campaign – humanitarian activists Loyal Lincoln Wirt, Mary Serle, Reverend James Creswell, Edith Glanville, and Ernest and Mary Bryce – energetically promoted the cause of those affected by the Armenian genocide, and the Orphanage became the focus of their efforts. This campaign is significant too because on many occasions efforts were made to transport Armenian orphans to Australia to save them, challenging the rigidity of the White Australia policy. Importantly, Mary and Ernest Bryce were the only activists who connected both the Armenian and Indigenous causes, identifying the destruction of Indigenous Australians as a genocide in the same way the destruction of the Armenian communities was described. In the Australian context, this campaign, it is argued, also marked a new break from British ties to a collaboration with American humanitarians.

Part II: Evacuating – 1930s and 1940s

The evacuation of children in war and the separation from their parents was a striking feature of this period. The evacuation of children was pronounced during the civil wars in Spain and Greece (1946– 1949), which saw more than

3,000 Basque children evacuated to Britain during the former, and 25,000 children from northern Greece into neighbouring countries during the latter. During the Second World War, evacuations of children began early in the war across Europe and continued throughout the five years of its duration. Evacuations spawned many humanitarian efforts, some of which have been well documented, while other efforts have received less attention. The practice of evacuation itself came under scrutiny and criticism from leading British psychoanalysts Donald Winnicott and John Bowlby. Donald Winnicott was the consulting psychiatrist for the Government Evacuation Scheme in Oxfordshire and worked with evacuated children, identifying the emotional dislocation of evacuation as a key factor in children's delinquent behaviour. Famously, John Bowlby identified the impact of severing maternal and paternal attachments from children during evacuation and warned against the separation of young children from their mothers. Bowlby and Winnicott warned in December 1939 of the psychological problems of evacuation and prolonged separation from their mother, especially for younger children aged two and five. The following chapters take several examples of evacuations and consider the specific humanitarian efforts attached to them to explore their gendered and racial aspects.

Chapter 3 explores the humanitarian work of the Australian communist Esme Odgers during the Spanish Civil War. Odgers's story highlights the child sponsorship programme as a humanitarian technique through PLAN, which has yet to be fully discussed within the history of Spanish humanitarian aid. Odgers's detailed letters written during the war offer unique insights into the material, social and psychological conditions under which humanitarian workers laboured, suggesting that humanitarian work was a multifaceted and unpredictable experience. An examination of this dimension allows for an exploration of emotions that humanitarian workers are expected to repress, and where the expression of individual emotions in the context of life and death is perceived as an indulgence. Further, a study of Odgers's humanitarian efforts during the Spanish Civil War sheds light on the impact of these endeavours beyond Europe, extending our understanding of the global impact of the war. Odgers's letters also reveal the trauma associated with dealing with the evacuation of children and reflects the psychological consequences of humanitarian work.

The evacuation of Jewish children from Europe to Palestine through the Youth Aliyah programme drew global attention. Chapter 4 considers the fundraising activities in the Australian and Jewish community around the organisation of Youth Aliyah, which attracted leading humanitarians such as Aileen Fitzpatrick, Jessie Street, Ruby Rich and Camilla Wedgewood. Youth Aliyah was founded in Germany in 1932 by Recha Freier, a committed Zionist, who was also active during the 1930s in Women's International Zionist Organisation. At the time, there was resistance to the idea of uprooting

children and taking them to Palestine to receive an agrarian, socialist education. As it became clear that the Nazi resolve was to eradicate the Jewish population, Youth Aliyah became a fully fledged child rescue effort. From 1933 to 1945, it evacuated 11,000 Jewish children, relocating them to Palestine. There has been little work on the global dimension of this campaign. By focusing on these fundraising efforts and other attempts to support Jewish children in Australia, Chapter 4 explores Youth Aliyah as a transnational global movement.

With the onset of the Second World War, the British government embarked on an evacuation programme, relocating its civilians in Britain and overseas, as discussed in Chapter 5. Children were a major part of the evacuation programme, which also involved the separation of children with their parents. In the early days of the war more than 800,000 children of school age were evacuated from their homes. In 1940, a second round of evacuations organised through the Children's Overseas Reception Board (CORB) resulted in 24,000 children being evacuated overseas to the British dominions, which included evacuations to Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. The scheme ran throughout 1940 and was stopped after the torpedo attack of the City of Benares in 1940, which resulted in the death of seventy-seven children travelling under the Children's Overseas Reception Board scheme.

Chapter 5 explores how Australia's participation in the Board's scheme reinforced imperial ties and was seen as vital to Australia's contribution to the war effort. Britain's children were seen as Australia's children, and the Australian government at the time enthusiastically embraced the scheme. But the scheme did this by more than simply accepting children – it was overtly racialised. Even before children departed, they were meticulously screened to establish who was eligible for the scheme. The unanimous support for the scheme was, I argue, premised on the narrative of emotions evoked by child evacuation and was framed by the constructed emotional bonds between the family of nations that connected countries to the values and aspirations of the British Empire.

The evacuation of 25,000 children from Northern Greece at the height of the Greek Civil War has a direct connection to Australia through the efforts of humanitarian Aileen Fitzpatrick, as discussed in Chapter 6. Drawing on arguments about notions of the family and the need for its continuation, Fitzpatrick was able to reunite children in neighbouring communist countries with their parents who had migrated to Australia. Several themes of significance run through Fitzpatrick's efforts. Her argument for the unification of families echoed and endorsed the political and cultural discourse of the day, that the conventional family unit – the cornerstone of 1950s Australia – defined assimilation of migrants and upheld the 'Australian way of life'. She hoped that in promoting an ideal of the white nuclear family, her appeal drawing together an emotional community would extend cross-culturally and

would be supported in Eastern Bloc countries to allow children to be repatriated with their families. Fitzpatrick perceived reuniting families as essential to humanitarianism and internationalism during the post-war period. A more humane and better society she believed, would be fostered and constructed with the ideal of the family unit intact, a sentiment shared by other welfare agencies, such as the International Red Cross and the Australian Council of Churches. But for Fitzpatrick, the evacuation of children involved much higher stakes. Saving the conventional family meant restoring the democratic way of life that she believed was defined by a 1950s understanding of the family. A focus on Fitzpatrick's activities allows for women's role as key players in international diplomacy and global movements to be highlighted, in ways that have not been recognised in accounts that focus on policy, the state and the role of diplomats.

Part III: Adopting and Assimilating – 1950s–1970s

In the post-war era, several agencies continued their work with refugee children, such as the sponsorship programmes of PLAN and Save the Children. Both were heavily involved in Australia after the war in very different ways. New organisations, such as UNICEF, were also central in Australia through the efforts of many women who had previously been involved in the League of Nations. The third civil war covered in this book, the Vietnam War, cast a long shadow over this period for Australians. The move for inter-country adoption became an overwhelming concern at this time for ordinary Australians who lobbied governments and saw the obligations of Australia in particular to adopt the children of Australian military personnel. This was apparent during the Korean War, and became heightened during the Vietnam War. The question of assimilation shapes this period, especially in relation to Save the Children, which becomes more directly involved in the new waves of migrants, as well as Indigenous children. The need to uphold White Australia prevailed as an assimilationist policy. This era further saw women at the forefront of several humanitarian campaigns involving children, through religious or other groups. Decolonisation also created new landscapes of how children would be assisted, from campaigns of charity to social justice. Although children's rights were identified across this period, humanitarian rights rather than human rights defined the period.

The formation of UNICEF in 1946 was a major turning point in humanitarian aid to children, as discussed in Chapter 7. The United Nations (UN) initiated the World Refugee Year in 1959–1960, which was based on ideas of humanitarian rights – the right to access humanitarian aid. Children formed a major part of these campaigns in fundraising and drawing on support. While UNICEF did not promote adoption, it retained the Western model of fundraising support in Southeast Asia through campaigns of aid and

development. Chapter 7 considers the role of UNICEF Australia in the region during the Vietnam War. Its campaign did so by depoliticising and decontextualising war by framing child refugees in neutral terms – as objects of humanitarian assistance to attract funds worthy of pity – rather than as victims of a political conflict, which would also demand a political analysis of US and Australian foreign policy. In doing so, it constructed an altruistic humanitarianism which framed donors as a community of secular heroes and saviours.

Save the Children was revived during the war and became a major organisation in dispersing funds to local children after the war, as discussed in Chapter 8. This signified a major shift in the role of the Fund in Australia, with localised branches working for the first time within Australia and in the Asian region. These activities directly impacted on Indigenous and migrant children, framed around the assimilation policies. The White Australia policy bound these endeavours. In Chapter 8 I consider two broad arguments. The first is that while the Save the Children branch developed a new localised identity, a form of imperial humanitarianism remained. My claim is that it did so through assimilation policies – which promoted an Australian way of life based on a White Britishness – that underpinned humanitarian work with Aboriginal children and war migrants. While this might not be surprising, it did make the Fund unique in post-war Australia. It was the only organisation that linked international humanitarianism to humanitarianism in Australia through its focus on Indigenous children and newly arrived war-refugee children. Arguably, these connections were possible only through a focus on *children* and the insistence that children were innocent, vulnerable victims across the globe. Second, this chapter continues the thread of examining the biography of lesser-known activists such as nurse Florence Grylls, which allows us to consider humanitarianism *in action* through attention to these campaigners.

The themes of adoption, assimilation and whiteness merged on the question of Korean children fathered by Australian servicemen. The theme of adoption looms large in the story as ordinary Australians wrote in large numbers seeking to adopt children. Chapter 9 examines the vast correspondence between Australians who pleaded with the government to allow adoption of these children. The public response to the predicament of the Japanese-Australian children borne of Australian servicemen and Japanese mothers offers an intriguing narrative of post-war humanitarianism that articulates the beginning of several historic shifts. The first is the paternalistic reaction of the day, promoting the traditional nuclear family life after the war, based on the victimhood and dependency of children, and romantic views of blameless childhood innocence. Although the United Nations enshrined the rights of the child in its charter in 1959, understandings of children's 'rights' were yet to shape popular narratives. Children were to be 'saved', but any suggestion of

the rights of the child had not yet entered the popular lexicon, at least not in relation to the campaign surrounding the welfare of these children. The clamour to bring Japanese children to Australia – whether for adoption by Australian couples, to reunite them with their wayward fathers, or to ‘save’ them in other ways by bringing them into Australia – paradoxically also challenged the White Australia policy, as many raised the need for flexibility surrounding this policy to make an exception for the children. Shared attitudes toward the plight of the children also brought about the collaboration of both religious and secular organisations that were not usually aligned on other issues and were, otherwise, philosophically and politically at odds. Humanitarian causes often brought these and other groups together, but the question of *children*, I argue, did so unconditionally, and this was the case with the Japanese-Australian children.

Chapter 10 explores the work of Foster Parents Plan (PLAN), the presence of which in the Asian region began in the 1950s, extending its scope beyond Europe from where it originated during the Spanish Civil War (see Chapter 4). It expanded its operations into a range of countries, including China in 1948, followed by Korea (1953), Vietnam (1957), Hong Kong (1959), the Philippines (1961), Indonesia (1969), Nepal (1978), India (1980), Sri Lanka (1981) and Thailand (1981). PLAN was distinct from other humanitarian programmes in that it developed a child sponsorship scheme. The language of development, financial assistance to so-called Third World nations and humanitarian aid invariably reflected earlier practices of colonialism, such as sending administrators to colonies and developing narratives of Western superiority.

PLAN at this time shows a hybrid form of humanitarianism in which the organisation never entirely relinquished its charity label. The human rights campaigns that marked this period were absent from PLAN’s firmly embedded form of humanitarianism, which retained elements of colonial paternalism as well as newly formed concepts of social justice, underpinned by moralism. Max Harris, Australian writer, poet and journalist, took an active and leading role in promoting the aims of PLAN in the region. He did so with great zest and enthusiasm. A study of the correspondence with the children that Harris sponsored, which aimed to capture the voices of children, reveals these voices were severely compromised and appropriated in order to serve the fundraising endeavours of PLAN itself. These attempts reflected Western constructs that aimed to elevate PLAN donors and sponsors to the status of saviours of ‘Third World’ countries and communities and satisfy their gaze.

Chapter 11 looks at Rosemary Taylor and Ellen Moir, the leading Australian humanitarians during the Vietnam War. Both were staunch advocates of inter-country adoption and supported evacuating war orphans to Australia, the United States and other countries. This created great debate and controversy at the time. Rosemary Taylor was one of the most prominent and high-profile humanitarians over the course of the history of child refugees and

humanitarianism. She arrived in Saigon in 1967 as an educational social worker with a refugee service sponsored by the Australian Council of Churches. Taylor's efforts in Vietnam with child refugees and orphanages captured the attention of the press, which called the children 'Rosemary's babies'. Acting as an informal liaison officer for orphanages across Vietnam, she was involved with the infamous Babylift of 1975, in which several hundred children were flown out of Vietnam to Australia – some for adoption by Australian families. Ellen Moir, a staunch advocate for inter-country adoption, was involved in smuggling five orphans into Australia without permits or documents in 1972, and worked with Taylor to attempt to expand the possibility of Australians adopting Vietnamese War orphans. Moir lobbied government agencies to allow children to enter the country. The role of humanitarian activists such as Taylor and Moir working largely outside of organised bodies led to a form of humanitarian activism which was at times ad hoc, chaotic and strident which allowed them to advocate for inter-country adoption to be seen as a solution to the increase in the number of child refugees and war orphans.

Across the twentieth century, these disparate events and contexts, people, actions and interventions were, as we shall now see, bound by the emotional communities they formed, seeking meaning and support for what they understood to be their humanitarian endeavours toward war child refugees.

