

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 45 | October 2024

Welcome to Spring

As we begin to leave the Winter chills and ailments behind us, we're looking forward to some warmer weather and spring colours.

Over the Winter months, we have been busy with some staff role changes and recruitment of new staff all aimed at providing timely, effective responses to your requests.

We're delighted to have recruited a new Coordinator of Community Education, and by now many of you will have met Richard either at the Drop-In or social support groups. If Richard hasn't been to your group yet, he is on his way to you, to share in conversation about the messages you want the community to receive and services that could benefit from education about the Forgotten Australian history/journey.

Many of you would be familiar with Tracey and Brigitte who have been delivering the health brokerage service over the years. Both Tracey and Brigitte have now moved to our Coordinated Support team. Tracey will still carry a lead role in health, while Brigitte will be responding to a variety of work across the team.

We are delighted to introduce Kristine Grant and Marissa Schoof to the Administration team. Under Kristine's coordination, all our staff processing health requests have worked very hard to clear the backlog of requests and bring the wait period down to one week. This has been a massive achievement!

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We're going green

As you know, this newsletter is sent by snail mail to reach all our valued service users, stakeholders, funding bodies and members of the public. We're continuing to print and send the newsletter by post, but we'd like to send it by email to anyone who is happy to receive it.

If you'd like to help the environment and get the newsletter as quickly as possible by email, contact us on:

1800 779 379 | info@openplace.org.au | openplace.org.au

We apologise for the significant delays over the last 12 months. The team has been developing new systems and processes to ensure we can maintain timely responses moving forward.

The Redress team farewelled Rose and Erika and have since welcomed Munni and Sonya who have transferred across from the Coordinated Support team. It is great to have this team fully staffed again, as there is a considerable demand for Redress support.

We are still recruiting to a few positions, so there will be more names and faces coming soon.

Saturday 16 November marks the 15th Anniversary of former Prime Minister the Hon Dr Kevin Rudd AC's Apology to Forgotten Australians and former child migrants. Open Place acknowledges that there are mixed feelings about the Apology and the actions that have and haven't followed. We plan to mark the anniversary on Friday 15 November with an event to promote awareness and understanding of the Forgotten Australian story and journey.

We have just received the announcement that applications to the Victorian Redress Scheme will open in December. You will find additional information on the scheme on page 7 of this newsletter, and we will update our website when more information is available.

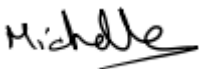
Until then, we will continue to support anyone wishing to apply for the advanced payment of \$10,000 which is available depending on specific medical criteria. If you believe you may be eligible, please contact the Coordinated Support team on 1800 779 379.

In November, the Alliance of Forgotten Australians will be holding their Annual General Meeting and forum in Melbourne and visiting Open Place during this time. The Alliance has been visiting Find and Connect Services across Australia when their meetings are held in different states or territories.

Work has begun in preparation for the annual Malvern Town Hall Christmas party on Saturday 14 December 2024. We look forward to seeing many of you there to share in a Christmas meal and some frivolity together.

Thank you to everyone who responded to our recent service survey. Over 350 responses were received which will help inform our ongoing service improvement and delivery.

Enjoy the beauty of spring and its new beginnings.



Michelle McDonald
Senior Manager Open Place

Welcome to Open Place

Kristine, Client Services Coordinator

Hello everyone, my name is Kristine. I am the new Client Services Coordinator and started at Open Place on Monday 1 July 2024.

I have a varied work background including as a Human Resources Manager, owning multiple business and most recently working in Event Management. This is my first time working in the community sector and I am thrilled at the opportunity.

Before returning to Melbourne and starting at Open Place, my partner and I lived in Tasmania for 25 years and then chose to travel for 2 years. I feel I have had a great break and am keen to focus back on work and family. We have 2 daughters, 2 toy poodles and 2 cats. I can tell you that the toy poodles have been the biggest handful!

I am so excited to be working at Open Place and look forward to getting to know you all better.



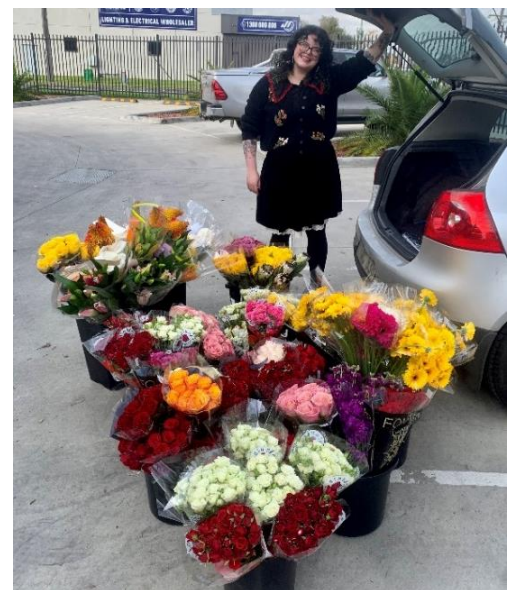
Marissa, Administration Officer Health Brokerage

Hello, my name is Marissa, and I have recently started working at Open Place as the Administration Officer in Health Brokerage. I have really been enjoying working at Open Place and love chatting with everyone I meet!

I am at the tail end of a degree in criminology and psychology and am very passionate about non-profit work. A lot of my background involves volunteering with people who have lived experience of prison. I also previously worked as a florist! Last year I combined the two and ran a free floristry workshop for those who have had lived experience of prison, as seen in the photo.

Some things I enjoy are gardening, reading, and crocheting. I have 2 cats named Pippin and Gimli; can you guess my favourite book series?

I'm always keen for a chat, so feel free to say hello anytime!



Richard Dove – Coordinator Community Education

Hey there, everyone. My name is Richard, and I've recently come on board as Coordinator Community Education. It is the best job in the world, by my reckoning, with welcoming and supportive staff, and a vibrant, engaged community of Forgotten Australians.

About me? Well, after a long career with Victoria Police, building the relationship between police and culturally diverse communities, and then almost 7 years coordinating the settlement of refugees in Melbourne's west (with Wyndham Community and Education Centre), I'm now here, with you. I'm

passionate and positive about building upon all the work that has gone before me, and harnessing change through education, so that Forgotten Australians can feel, and be, more positive about their future.

Right now, I'm heading out to all Social Support Groups around the state to consult Forgotten Australians about **who** needs to know more about Forgotten Australians; **what** they need to know; **why** they need to know it; and what **changes** you're hoping will occur from knowing it. I'm then using this information to develop an education package, which will be targeted at business, health, government, community and education services, and more – as well as a range of community engagement projects.

I'm also calling upon Forgotten Australians not attached to Social Support Groups to contact me at rdove@rav.org.au and let me know your thoughts.

Over time, through this newsletter forum, I will keep you updated of the positive changes that have occurred. I'm also hoping, over time, that you, Forgotten Australians, will actively be involved in helping make those changes occur.

Ebba Lochert – Coordinated Support Worker

Hi my name is Ebba and I am a qualified Social Worker with experience across multiple community service sectors.

I grew up in country South Australia and completed my studies and early roles in Adelaide, in Native Title research and offenders' aid and rehabilitation. Moving to Melbourne in 2019 I coordinated long-term homelessness programs, worked across homelessness COVID-19 emergency responses and team-led a disaster recovery program in the Dandenong and Yarra Ranges.

I am passionate about the outdoors, spending time in nature, and sharing food and music with family and friends.



Sonya Tsakalakis – Redress Support Worker

Hello, my name is Sonya, and I started at Open Place in March this year as a Coordinated Support Worker and transitioned to the role of Redress Worker in August.

I have a varied work history, beginning my career as a genetic counsellor. After recently returning to university to complete a Master of Social Work, I was employed as a bicultural worker for PRONIA (formerly Australian Greek Welfare Society) and on the phone support line for the Council of Single Mothers and their Children.

I have an abiding interest in fusing the arts with healing, and practices bibliotherapy (or book therapy) when time permits!



Forgotten Australian's March Commemorating the 15th Anniversary of the National Apology

You are INVITED!!!

All Forgotten Australians and friends and family are warmly invited to participate in our 15th Anniversary March to commemorate the National Apology.

Date: Friday 15 November 2024

Starting location: Open Place, 1/8 Bromham Place, Richmond

Destination: Citizen's Park (cnr Church and Highett St, Richmond)

Time: 11:15am for a 12:00pm commencement

The 15th Anniversary March will take the place of our usual Friday cook-up and Drop-In events.

The distance of the march is less than one kilometre. For those who may find it difficult to march the distance on the day, alternative arrangements will be provided.

This special day is also a wonderful opportunity to catch up with fellow Forgotten Australians as we come together to commemorate this important date.

This event welcomes everyone who is able to attend.

Unfortunately, as much as Open Place would love to cover funding for transport, our budget won't extend that far.

More details will be provided on our Open Place website, at social support groups, and during Drop-In events and activities. Stay tuned!





Open Place Christmas Party **2024**

The Open Place team is excited to announce the annual Christmas Party!

We would love to see you and your partner/friend/carer; however, places are limited so please let us know if you'd like to come by Friday 22 November on (03) 9421 6162 or free call 1800 779 379.



When: Saturday 14 December 2024



Time: 10am – 3pm

Where: Malvern Town Hall – Corner Glenferrie Road and High Street, Malvern

RSVPs are required!

You must be registered with Open Place.

Unfortunately, no children (under 18yrs) or animals will be permitted entry (*registered service animals allowed, proof of registration must be provided).

Redress for historical institutional abuse (Victorian Redress Scheme)

The Victorian Government will offer Redress to people who were physically, emotionally or psychologically abused and neglected as children in institutional settings in Victoria before 1990.

Redress will include:

- a payment of up to \$20,000
- a personal apology – in person or written
- up to 20 counselling sessions

Eligible people will be able to choose to accept any or all the above.

It is anticipated that Redress will open for applications in December 2024 and run for 18 months. Further information on how to apply will be provided at this time.

Eligibility

To apply, you must have:

- lived in Victorian institutions for at least 6 months (total) before 1 January 1990
- experienced physical, psychological, or emotional abuse or neglect as a child (less than 18 years old) while living in institutions before 1990.

When applying, you will need to agree to share your information with other non-government and government institutions.

Advance Redress Payments

Until the Victorian Redress Scheme starts, an Advance Redress Payment of \$10,000 is available to people who were physically, emotionally or psychologically abused or neglected as children in institutional settings in Victoria before 1990 and **are terminally or critically ill**.

If you have received an Advance Redress Payment, you can still apply for redress.

If you meet the eligibility criteria for Redress and have received \$10,000 for the Advance Redress Payment, this amount will be deducted from the Redress payment.

Each application will be considered in accordance with the eligibility criteria.

Advance Redress Payments will be available until the Victorian Redress Scheme starts.

Payment from other schemes

You can apply for the Victorian Redress Scheme even if you have received Redress from another scheme, institution or civil claim. However, if you have already received payment through another scheme or institution, you may not receive the full \$20,000.

Counselling

A counselling service will be offered to applicants who accept an offer (and their family members):

- for the duration of Redress
- and within the financial year that applications for Redress close.

The counselling service will be aligned with the Department's existing National Redress Scheme Counselling and Psychological Care Service Victoria and will:

- be delivered by suitably qualified professionals (i.e. psychologists, mental health practitioners) working as individuals or part of organisations. This should include a person's existing practitioner wherever possible.
- include counselling, group work, alternative therapies (limited), and cultural healing for First Nations peoples.
- include up to 20 counselling sessions.

Personal apology

Restorative engagement for abuse or neglect and harm will be offered to all applicants found eligible for Redress and will be delivered by senior representatives of responsible institutions (i.e. government and/or non-government).

Personal apologies will:

- offer applicants opportunities for a facilitated restorative conversation, apologies and/or acknowledgements of impact of abuse and harm (if disclosed) in a face-to-face or written format.
- give applicants an opportunity to speak to their experience and its impact.
- seek to be responsive to applicants' requests to include senior institutional representative/s, an independent facilitator and support person/s.

You can visit the Victorian Government's website for more information

<http://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/people-institutional-settings-pre-1990>

Former resident's reunions

Melbourne Orphanage Reunion 2024



Melbourne Orphanage Reunion 2024

OzChild humbly requests the pleasure of your company at
The Melbourne Orphanage Reunion Afternoon Tea.

When: Sunday 10 November
Where: Brighton Beach Primary School, 19 Windermere Cres, Brighton VIC 3186
Time: 12pm – 3pm

Please RSVP to **Judi Vanderheiden** by **Friday 25 October** on
03 9695 2200 or email jvanderheiden@ozchild.org.au



Gordon Boys Home

Open Place service user Peter Edwards Hicks (better known as 'Hicksey') is looking to connect with anyone who was in Gordon Boys Home. If you remember Peter and would like to get in touch, please contact Open Place on (03) 9421 6162.

Box Hill Boys' Home Reunion

All ex-residents of the Box Hill Boys' Home are invited to the next reunion which will be held on the 23rd of November at 12pm at Windy Hill venue (corner of Napier and Brewster St, Essendon VIC 3040).

For more information, please call Ray Turner on 0427 332 584 or Joe Turner 9363 4799.

Save the date – MacKillop Family Services Christmas party for former residents

If you were at any of the following homes, you are warmly invited to register for Mackillop's Connect newsletter, which will include an invitation to their Christmas Party for Former Residents:

- St Joseph's Babies Home, Broadmeadows
- St Anthony's Home, Kew
- St Joseph's Home for Boys, Surrey Hills
- St Vincent de Paul Boy's Home, South Melbourne
- St Vincent de Paul Girl's Home, South Melbourne
- St Catherine's Orphanage, Geelong
- St Augustine's Orphanage, Geelong

The Christmas Party for Former Residents will be held on Tuesday 10 December, 11am – 3pm, at Mackillop Family Services in South Melbourne - 237 Cecil St, South Melbourne VIC 3205.

Please contact Mackillop on 9699 9177 or at enquiry@mackillop.org.au to register for the Connect newsletter.



Save the date – Anglicare Victoria Christmas party for former residents

Anglicare Victoria will be holding their annual Christmas Luncheon for past clients at the Highett RSL from 12pm to 3pm on Saturday 30 November 2024. For more information, please contact Bronwen Sarantoulia at the Heritage Services on 9412 6133.

Kilmany Park – Unveiling of commemorative plaque

For many years, a group of past residents of Kilmany Park have been working with Uniting Vic Tas towards the creation of a physical reminder of all those who lived there.

On Saturday 14 September at the Uniting Church in Sale (corner of Raymond and Macalister Streets) there was an unveiling of a commemorative plaque to remember the boys who lived at Kilmany Park Farm Home for Boys. Past residents, family and friends were invited, and people travelled from Queensland, Western Australia and New South Wales to attend.

Following the unveiling a lunch was provided and the current owners of Kilmany Park (which is now a B&B) opened the property for anyone who wished to visit.

Two of the past residents who were involved in advocating for this recognition were Ray Shingles and Albert Middleton, who attends the Sale Social Support Group (SSG) with Ray also making a speech. Representatives from both the Sale SSG and Open Place attended this significant event, with the Uniting Church being the first to place a commemorative plaque on its premises.

The plaque reads: 'Almost 1,000 boys lived at Kilmany Park Home, formerly known as Pearson Dale, from 1925 to 1977. This reminds us of each of them and we acknowledge and remember them, particularly those who died before their time. May they not be forgotten.'



(L-R: Albert, Michelle, Ray and Ray)



(L-R: Rose, Carmen, Shaye and Liz)



(L-R: Michelle, Ray, Rose and Carmen)

NAIDOC Week

Open Place recognises that many Forgotten Australians may also be a member of the Stolen Generations. National NAIDOC Week celebrations are held across Australia in the first week of July each year (Sunday to Sunday), to celebrate and recognise the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

This year, on Tuesday 9 July, Shaye from Open Place was a guest at the Aboriginal Advancement League celebration along with Uncle George Hall who is a Yorta Yorta Wiradjuri man and member of the Stolen Generations, Peter Johannsen and Yorta Yorta Elder Aunty Jane Rosengrave.

In the words of Uncle George Hall, they enjoyed a 'sumptuous 3-course meal with all the trimmings, entertainment and dancing by the Black Fire Band'. We would like to thank and acknowledge Aboriginal Advancement League CEO Aunty Dr Esme Bamblett and all Elders past and present.



(L-R: George, Shaye and Peter)

Helpful information

How to access subsidised short-term residential respite care

If you or your carer needs a break from daily routines, short-term residential respite care may be an ideal option.

What is residential respite care?

Residential respite care offers a short-term stay in an aged care facility or nursing home, allowing carers to take a well-deserved break.

Is respite care government-funded?

Yes, the Australian Government provides funding for up to 63 days of respite care per eligible person each financial year, with the allocation resetting on 1 July.

Who is eligible for government-subsidised respite care?

Australians aged 65 years and older (or 50 years and older for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people) who need assistance with daily living are generally eligible. If you or your loved one doesn't meet the standard eligibility criteria but still require respite care, contact My Aged Care at 1800 200 422 to discuss your situation.

How can I get respite care?

To access subsidised respite care, you'll need to complete an assessment through My Aged Care. Start by calling them at 1800 200 422. In emergencies, you may be able to access respite care without an assessment, and your provider can arrange an urgent assessment if needed.

How much will I need to pay for respite care?

Residential respite care fees differ from those for permanent residents in aged care homes. You won't need to pay accommodation deposits or bonds. For a residential respite stay, you'll need to pay:

- a basic daily fee, set by the government at 85% of the single basic aged pension
- a booking fee, which will be deducted from your daily fees during your stay.

What if I can't afford to pay?

If you're unable to afford the cost of respite care, you can apply for financial hardship assistance. If eligible, the government may cover part or all of your respite care fees.

What if I'm having an emergency and need respite care immediately?

If you need immediate respite care in an emergency, call Carer Gateway at 1800 422 737. This service is available 24/7.

The Open Place Coordinated Support team can provide more details if you need them.

Understanding home care packages

What is a home care package?

A home care package is a program funded by the Australian Government to help people aged 65 and over with complex care needs to live safely and independently at home. It provides personalised care and services to assist with daily activities that you may now find challenging.

Steps to get a home care package

Step 1: Assessment - First, you need to be assessed by an Aged Care Assessment Team to determine your eligibility. Visit www.myagedcare.gov.au/assessment or call 1800 200 422 to arrange an assessment.

Step 2: Package assignment - Once approved, you'll be placed in a queue for a Home Care Package. You'll receive a letter when your package is assigned.

Step 3: Choosing a provider - After receiving your package, you'll select a provider to manage your care needs. Use the 'Find a Provider' tool on the My Aged Care website to compare providers in your area.

Step 4: Income assessment - You may need to contribute to the cost of your care through fees. Services Australia will conduct an income assessment to determine if you need to pay the income-tested care fee. This fee doesn't apply to full pensioners.

What services are included in a home care package?

Your home care package can cover a variety of services based on your needs and care plan, such as:

- Personal Care: Help with bathing, grooming, and hygiene.
- Nursing: Assistance with managing medical conditions at home.
- Allied Health: Services like podiatry and physiotherapy to maintain mobility.
- Meal Preparation: Support with meal delivery or food preparation.
- Household Tasks: Help with cleaning, laundry, and home maintenance.
- Home Modifications: Changes to help you move around your home safely.
- Mobility Aids: Equipment to help with mobility, communication, and daily tasks.

- Transport: Assistance with getting to medical appointments or community activities.
- Social Support: Encouragement to stay connected with the community.
- Respite Care: Support for your carer to take a break.
- Care Management: Ongoing assessment and planning of your care needs.

Where to find more information

For more details about home care packages, visit the My Aged Care website (www.myagedcare.gov.au/help-at-home/home-care-packages) or call 1800 200 422. You can also contact the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) at 1800 700 600 for free, confidential assistance.

If you have questions or concerns about the income assessment process, you can call Services Australia on **1800 227 475** or visit your nearest service centre at findus.servicesaustralia.gov.au

The Open Place Coordinated Support team can provide more details if you need them.

Thread Together

Thread Together collects unsold, brand-new clothing from fashion retailers around the country. With the support of volunteers, the clothes are sorted in readiness to be distributed to people in need through their national network of charities and social service agencies.

Open Place is partnered with the Thread Together service and all clothing is given at no cost to people. Each person has access to the service once every 3 months.

The service runs via appointment only and all appointments are 45 minutes long. Referrals and bookings are to be made through Open Place.

You can attend the clothing hub alone or with support from a worker, friend, or family member.

Please see the Thread Together website for more information: threadtogether.org

Locations: Richmond, Ballarat, or Wangaratta.

If you would like to attend a Thread Together appointment or learn more, please call Open Place on 1800 779 379.



Pausing to remember

In the course of our work at Open Place, sadly, from time to time, we hear of the passing of Forgotten Australians.

We thought some of you might like to know that Open Place staff take some time out of their schedule each month to acknowledge those Forgotten Australians who have passed away, share memories and stories, and to reflect on what a privilege it is to work with Forgotten Australians.

We are aware that sometimes people may pass away, and Open Place doesn't learn of this until sometime later. We'd invite anyone connected to the Open Place community to let us know of the passing of any Forgotten Australians, so that the staff can include them in our thoughts.

If you would like to let us know of someone's passing, you can do this by emailing info@openplace.org.au or calling 1800 779 379 and asking to speak to Cameron.



Team updates

Records team

The Open Place Records team continues to provide records and family search support for Forgotten Australians, and we thank you for your patience while we work through our current waitlists.

There has been a change to our team since the last newsletter as Kim, who was with us for a short time as coordinator, has since moved on to another role. Our team now consists of Lydia, Siobhan, Emma and Sharon.

In May, we visited the Good Shepherd Heritage Service where we were shown around the Convent grounds and visited the Memorial plaque for former residents. The Good Shepherd Heritage team welcome former residents to get in touch by phone 1800 812 702 or email heritage@goodshep.org.au if they would like to visit the site with support of the Heritage team.

If you would like to discuss a records or family search request, please contact Open Place to speak to a Records team member.

Coordinated Support team

The Coordinated Support team can assist with enquiries regarding a variety of needs.

We can provide referrals to link you into specialist service providers and advocate on your behalf by providing support letters to help with housing, National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) questions, energy relief grants, aged care, Centrelink, emergency relief referrals, health and mental health, wills, and much more.

Please contact the Coordinated Support team with any requests for support.

Staff changes

This year has seen some changes in staff and roles within the Coordinated Support team, to support you in connection with the new Victorian Redress Scheme (see page 7) and applications for Advanced Redress Payments.

We welcomed Sonya and Ebba to the new roles, and they quickly became very well informed on all things Advanced Redress Payment.

We also welcomed Brigitte as a Coordinated Support Worker, and Tracey joined us as the new Coordinated Support Health Worker. Brigitte and Tracey were previously with the Health team.

Shaye has also joined the Coordinated Support team, combining her role as an Intake and Drop-In Worker and Coordinated Support Worker.

With a full team, we've been able to offer more outreach, going out to meet with service users to assist in-person with many requests, especially supporting service users with Advanced Redress Payment applications.

Recently the National Redress Support team had some roles available and Sonya and Munni moved over to support this work. Munni had been with Coordinated Support for 7 years.

Our team currently consists of:

- Annie (regional outreach worker)
- Brigitte (coordinated support worker)
- Ebba (coordinated support worker)
- Tracey (coordinated support health worker)
- Shaye (Drop-In Worker extraordinaire)
- Lesley (Coordinator)

We would like to thank Munni and Sonya for the work they have done in our team and wish them all the best in their new roles.

Health team

We have had some exciting changes to the Open Place Health team and would like to introduce the following new staff members to you:

- Kristine our new Client Services Coordinator and
- Marissa our new Administration Officer Health Brokerage

You all know Sandy, our wonderful receptionist, who continues to support the team.

Tracey continues to support the Health team in the newly created role of Coordinated Support Worker – Health.

Please don't hesitate to introduce yourselves to Kristine or Marissa if you visit the Drop-In or welcome them to the Open Place team if speaking to them on the phone.

As a team, we've been focusing on decreasing the wait times for anyone who needs health advice or support. We've already made great progress in ensuring your health payments are paid and processed within 7 days. An ongoing priority is making sure people get the help they need as quickly as possible.

If you have any questions regarding health needs and/or health funding, please contact the Health team and we will get back to you as soon as we can.

Health funding for the 2024/25 financial year remains at \$1250 per person. For a copy of the guidelines, please see our website openplace.org.au/health-support or call us on 1800 779 379.

Counselling team

Open Place continues to provide and fund counselling support for Forgotten Australians and family members. If you would like to arrange counselling or find out more, please get in touch with us by calling 1800 779 379 and asking to speak with a member of the counselling team. We will usually get back to you within 1-2 working days.

We can arrange for you to see an external counsellor in private practice (someone that does not work directly for Open Place, but we make an agreement for Open Place to pay for your sessions with them). We always make sure that any counsellors we refer to are suitably qualified and registered with a professional association, whatever form of therapy they offer. We also have a small team of Open Place counsellors based in the offices at Richmond. If this is the best option for you, the counsellor will arrange an initial intake appointment to meet with you and discuss your situation in more detail, and whether we will be able to help. Please note that there may be waiting times to see an Open Place counsellor. Sometimes we may recommend an external counsellor if they will be able to better assist you.

Recent changes to counselling agreements with external counsellors

Those of you who currently see an external counsellor through Open Place funding may have spoken recently with your counsellor about some changes to counselling arrangements. For Forgotten Australians whose time in 'care' was in Victoria and for a period of 6 months or more, this will mean your counsellor may be able to see you for more sessions than in previous years. The exact agreement can vary due to a range of factors including the counselling fee charged by the counsellor, the counsellor's capacity to provide sessions, and the duration and place of Forgotten Australian's time in 'care'.

If you would like to talk to someone from Open Place about the recent changes to counselling arrangements and what this means for you, please call 1800 779 370 and ask to speak with a member of the counselling team.

Therapeutic groupwork

The counselling team at Open Place are planning to run therapeutic support groups and workshops on different topics in the future. It may be possible for us to run shorter workshops in regional areas in Victoria.

If you think you may be interested in attending future groups or workshops, or have an idea for therapeutic groupwork you'd like to discuss with us, please register your interest with us by:

- calling 1800 770 379 and asking to speak with a member of the counselling team, or
- emailing openplacecounselling@openplace.org.au.

Mental health crisis support

Just a reminder that the Open Place counselling service is not a crisis service - we are appointment-based and operate during business hours. We are not able to provide an immediate crisis response.

The 2 main crisis services for 24/7 mental health support are Lifeline 13 11 14, and Beyond Blue 1300 224 636. If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call 000.

You can find an extensive list of telephone and online support services at rav.org.au/resources/mental-health-services if you need immediate support.

Staff movements

We recently said farewell to Lejla Arnautovic from the Senior Counsellor role at Open Place. During her time here, Lejla was instrumental in updating our internal counselling processes and provided valuable support to the team and to the Forgotten Australians she worked with directly. We wish Lejla the best in her new job.

Redress Support team

Our Redress Support team assists Forgotten Australians to apply for the National Redress Scheme (NRS), for people who experienced childhood sexual abuse in institutional 'care'. Any Forgotten Australian considering making an application to the NRS is strongly encouraged to get support, to ensure you get the best outcome. Redress Support Workers can visit regional areas in Victoria to meet people who would like in-person support with their Redress application.

Our team is highly skilled at supporting people with their applications and we are aware that it can be a difficult and challenging process, as it involves sharing details about childhood sexual abuse. We work with people at their own pace with a 'safety first' approach that puts your wellbeing first. This means that once you are linked with a Redress Support Worker and the application process is started, the time it takes to complete an application can vary from person to person. Our team will work with you at the pace that best suits you and your circumstances.

Outcomes from the NRS can include a financial payment, access to counselling, and a Direct Personal Response (an apology) from a representative of the responsible institutions.

If you would like to discuss the NRS, who is eligible to apply and what support we can offer, please get in touch with Open Place.

You can also visit the NRS website nationalredress.gov.au for information.

Staff changes

We have recently welcomed 2 new workers to the Redress Support team. Some of you may already know Munni and Sonya from their work with the Open Place Coordinated Support team. We are excited to welcome them to the Redress Support team. Munni and Sonya bring experience of supporting Forgotten Australians and look forward to continuing to do so their new roles.

We said farewell to Erika, who has moved on from Open Place. Erika worked across several teams during her time working at Open Place, most recently providing compassionate and skilled

support to Forgotten Australians going through the NRS. We'd like to thank Erika for her contribution and wish her the best in her future endeavours.

Drop-In Centre

Free activities

- **Art Group:** Join us every third Thursday of the month from 1pm to 4pm.
- **Haircuts:** Available every 6 weeks on a Tuesday between 11am and 1pm. Our new hairdresser/barber with 25 years of experience caters to all hair types.
- **Podiatry (Foot Care):** Offered every third Wednesday of the month from 1pm to 3pm.

For activity updates between newsletters, visit openplace.org.au/events

Friday cook-up

Every Friday, Emma and her co-chefs cook a delicious hearty meal with dessert, for anyone who is a registered service user to enjoy. It is an enjoyable day, filled with delicious food and all are welcome.

Join us between 10am and 3pm every Friday.



Oz Harvest

We receive an Oz Harvest food delivery each week, and often receive lots of different fruits, vegetables, frozen meals, frozen meat and treats for all to take. This is available on a Friday after lunch at the Drop-In centre.



Social support groups (SSGs)

Gippsland/Sale SSG

Our Gippsland group continues to grow, and everyone has been really welcoming of new members. We have recently been to lunch in Rosedale Hotel, and everybody enjoyed their meals and a chance to venture out of Sale. We look forward to another visit there next year.

Each month we celebrate birthdays with a cake and recently we have had 2 big birthdays celebrated in the group. Long-time group members Theesia and David both turned 80 and it was great to be able to celebrate with them.

In September, we were at our home base and in October we will have lunch at the Sale Bowls Club.



Donald and District SSG

The Donald and District SSG meets every second month, on the fourth Thursday of the month.

Our group members come from a very large area, including Marnoo, St Arnaud, Beulah, and Horsham. Some of our members are quite isolated and do travel quite long distances to get to their group (up to 2 hours). As a group we try to spread the outings across this region. In the last few months, the group have enjoyed an outing to the Donald Hotel where Ebba from the Coordinated Support team came and talked to the group about Advanced Redress Payments, and how the Open Place Coordinated Support team can support them in the region. We have also been to the Sportsman's Club in St Arnaud where Richard Dove came to talk and listen to our group members about how his role as Coordinator Community Education can help to educate the community about Forgotten Australians and Open Place.

Contact Sharon for more information about our SSG on 0417 067 910.

Shepparton SSG

In May, the Shepparton SSG had a visit from Joel Male, a Community Engagement Worker from the Mental Health and Wellbeing Local service, who told us about the free supports they offer during our lunch at the Community Hub.

We took shelter from a rainy day in June by having a lovely lunch together at the Nagambie Rowing Club. We sat beside a roaring fire, with a view over Nagambie Lake and had a great catch-up sharing stories and laughs, with delicious food.

Our big day out in July was for a fantastic feed at King City Chinese restaurant. We had such a great turn-out and it was just lovely to see so many of the group together, welcoming old and new members.

We look forward to seeing you and catching up over the coming months!



Preston SSG

The Preston SSG continues to meet monthly for lunches, activities, and outings. In June, the group met at the Preston Library for a lunch, and Sonya from the Redress Support team provided an information session on Victorian Redress Advanced Payments. July saw us enjoying a 2-course pub lunch at the Croxton Hotel. In August, the group gathered for an exciting outing to the National Gallery of Victoria, where we enjoyed a lunch at the gallery's café before heading in and exploring the incredible Pharaoh Exhibition!

The Preston group meets on the third Friday of every month, and we welcome any new members who are interested in joining!



Ballarat SSG

Since the last newsletter, the Ballarat SSG has enjoyed some lovely catchups.

We took a trip to the cinema in May to see 'Wicked Little Letters' – a comedy, but not for the faint hearted! Based on a true scandal, it follows an investigation into the anonymous author of numerous crudely insulting letters sent to the residents of seaside town Littlehampton.

In June we had a morning tea at our home base, the Sebastopol RSL, and group members took part in making hand-built ceramics, led by Emma.

July saw us take a trip to the Golden Point Hotel for a sold-out Morning Melodies with Frankie M performing classic 50s and 60s hits.

In August we were back at the Sebastopol RSL and those who made pottery in June had an opportunity to decorate their bisque-fired pieces. Bisque firing is the process to transform unfired clay from its fragile state to a porous and durable state (called ceramic) in preparation for the second stage of firing. We can't wait to see how these pieces come out!

In September we took an extra sweet trip to the Daylesford Chocolate Shop!

If you are interested in attending the Ballarat SSG on the second Tuesday of the month, please contact Open Place.



Frankston SSG

The Frankston SSG visited the Naked Racer in August. Part antique motorcycle museum and part restaurant, we thoroughly enjoyed seeing the various bikes and motoring memorabilia the venue had to offer. Though we all agreed the strong smell of gasoline was a bit much!

We also began planning the next few outings for the rest of the year, including our Christmas lunch. Big thanks to all who could join us.



If you would like to attend the Frankston SSG on the first Friday of each month, please contact Open Place on 1800 779 379.

Dandenong SSG

Dandenong SSG meets on the last Wednesday of the month. April was our first group without Di. We welcomed Ebba as the new co-facilitator and had pizza lunch at Edinburgh Hall.

May was a Lynbrook Hotel morning tea and buffet lunch, and it is always our most popular outing. The food is fabulous, and the service is excellent. We start with scones and tea and coffee and then the buffet is all you can eat, with an assortment of seafood, curries, stir-fries, soup, roast and so much more. The absolute cherry on the cake is their dessert station. FYI the sticky toffee pudding is a must-try!

June was bingo! We had 4 winners who all took home a lovely gift bag with winter warmers and a Coles voucher. Richard is the new Coordinator Community Education at Open Place, and he joined us for Christmas in July at Edinburgh Hall. We had Neale's spit roast cater for our lunch and everyone said it was very good food. We also had gift bags for all!!

Morning melodies in August was well attended and we all enjoyed a bit of "One Night in Vegas"



Sadly, we have said a final farewell to 2 of our members, who have passed away recently. RIP Greg Martin and Patricia Patching.

Geelong SSG

The Geelong SSG catches up on the second Wednesday of the month (except January). We meet bi-monthly at the Grovedale Neighbourhood House and the other month we go on an outing. If you live in the Geelong area and wish to join our SSG, please give Annie a call on 0427 695 600 (Monday to Thursday).

In May we made our way out for lunch at the Gateway Hotel where we enjoyed a feast of a buffet lunch and a good catch-up with one another.

June found us back at the Grovedale Neighbourhood House where we played bingo. Denise put her hand up to be the 'Caller', she was very professional and entertaining. We also had Joanne stepping in to help some of us with an extra set of eyes.

We tried the Shell Club in Corio for lunch in July and it didn't disappoint. An enjoyable meal, good company and a good venue to return to in the future.

In August the group welcomed Richard Dove – Open Place's new Coordinator Community Education Coordinator. We enjoyed a good catch up and consultation with Richard.



Bendigo SSG

We get together at the Long Gully Community Centre bi-monthly on the third Thursday of every month (except January). On the other month we go on an outing. If you live in the Bendigo area and have been thinking of coming along, please call or text Annie on 0427 695 600 or Sharon on 0417 067 910 (Monday-Thursday).

In May we attended the Kangaroo Flat Sports Club where we have enjoyed 'doing lunch' many times in the past and will no doubt return.



June was back at the Long Gully Community Centre for a nice catch up, lunch and scrumptious home-made cakes made by Dolly – always a welcome treat!

We tried a new venue for lunch in July at the All-Seasons Hotel, Bendigo. We had a good turnout, a nice catch-up and a good feed was enjoyed by all.

In August, back at Long Gully Community Centre, some of the group members enjoyed a mosaic workshop whilst the rest of the gang enjoyed catching up before we all came together for a good natter with Richard Dove (our new Coordinator Community Education) over some lunch.

The photo here is our unfinished pots – watch this space for our next newsletter when we can share the finished products and the artists.



South west/Warrnambool SSG

We meet at Archie Graham Centre in Warrnambool every second month on the first Wednesday of the month (except January). On alternate months, we go on an outing. If you live in the Warrnambool area and have been thinking about coming along, please give Annie a call or text on 0427 695 600 (Monday-Thursday).

In June we had a good turnout at Archie Graham of keen group members to play some billiards. This was a popular activity with lots of laughter, competitiveness and some shenanigans enjoyed by all.

We were fortunate in July that the sun was shining when we enjoyed an outing/lunch at the Allansford Cheese World and Museum. We enjoyed a complimentary tasting of all the different cheeses made at the factory before heading into the museum for an informal chat with volunteers and a wander around.

August found us back at Archie Graham where we had a good catch up, some lunch and had some games of bingo.



Wangaratta SSG

During the winter months, the social group has focused on indoor activities to escape the bitter northern Victorian cold! Bingo has been a popular activity for the group, with highly valuable prizes at stake (chocolate bars).

We also saw the movie Twisters. Our yearly trip to Gold Class cinema has become a highlight on the calendar and is one of our most popular group activities.

As spring and summer approach, we will be heading back outside and looking forward to picnics and lighting up the barbeque again.

If you are in the Wodonga/Wangaratta area and want to get involved, please call Open Place on 1800 779 379 and ask for Munni or Cameron.



Bacchus Marsh SSG

The Bacchus Marsh SSG has been having some great outings and having lots of fun!

In May we went to the zoo, had lunch and enjoyed walking around and the highlight was definitely the safari tour. In June, the group went bowling with the lots of fun and laughs had by everyone.

In September we had an outing to the Pharaoh exhibition at the NGV.

We look forward to our planned activities for the remainder of the year.



Horsham SSG

The Horsham SSG has enjoyed some great outings this year so far including some delicious lunches and of course catching up with each other's news and having a laugh.

In June, we tried something a bit different and went bowling. It was a great day out and a lot of fun, as you can see from the picture below.

Another highlight was a lovely 'Christmas in July' meal at the Vic Hotel complete with roast dinner and pudding. The group is hoping to get out and about when the weather is better and perhaps have a BBQ or picnic in November.

Horsham SSG welcomes any people registered with Open Place who are interested in joining the group to contact Open Place on 1800 779 379.



Curry Sweet Potato and Red Lentil Soup Recipe

A fan favourite soup at the Drop-In Centre.

Serves 4 – 6 people

Ingredients

2 teaspoons curry powder
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 onions, diced
1 green apple, peeled, cored and diced
3 garlic cloves, minced
1/3 cup coriander, roughly chopped
1 inch piece fresh ginger, minced
2 large sweet potatoes, cubed
1 cup dried red lentils
5 cups vegetable stock (or half vegetable & half chicken stock)
1 can coconut milk
Juice of 1 lime



Method

1. **Toast the curry:** Heat a large pot over medium heat, add curry powder, and toast for 2 minutes until it darkens and smells fragrant. Stir in olive oil and let the spices sizzle.
2. **Sauté:** Add onions, apple, garlic, cilantro, and ginger. Cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.
3. **Simmer:** Add sweet potatoes, lentils, broth, and milk. Bring to a boil, then cover and simmer on low for 20 minutes until sweet potatoes are tender and lentils are soft.
4. **Purée:** Let it cool slightly, then blend until smooth. Stir in lime juice, and adjust seasoning with salt, pepper, and more lime juice if needed. Add more milk or water for a thinner consistency.
5. **Serve:** Top with chopped corrainder, red pepper flakes, and coconut cream. Add a squeeze of lime for extra brightness.

Suggestions

We welcome any suggestions from you on how we can improve our services to better suit your needs.

Maybe you have some ideas for our social support groups, newsletter, Richmond Drop-In Centre, or our workshops/activities.

Contact us and let us know.

We would love to hear from you!

Contact us

If you would like **information** about your current services or want to share your **suggestions**, find out how Open Place can **support** you, or **subscribe** to receive this newsletter by email, please contact us.

- Free call **1800 779 379**
- Visit openplace.org.au/contact-us
- Email info@openplace.org.au
- Write to us at:
Open Place
Suite 1/8 Bromham Place
Richmond VIC 3121



We acknowledge the pain and loss of childhood experienced by Forgotten Australians and we recognise the lifelong impacts of childhood trauma.



We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waterways of Australia. We support Aboriginal people's right to self-determination and culturally safe services.



Open Place is committed to providing safe, inclusive and accessible services for all people.