

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 48 | October 2025

OPEN PLACE

Support Service for Forgotten Australians

Relationships
AUSTRALIA • VIC

Welcome to our October newsletter

A note from Michelle McDonald, Senior Manager Open Place

Well, here we are halfway through spring with typical unpredictable spring weather, much colour in the garden and baby birds aplenty.

During the winter months we saw many of our staff taking holidays amidst a range of other personal leave. I was lucky to be one of those on leave in June enjoying a trip overseas, walking in Italy and Switzerland.

In unfortunate news, our Coordinator of Records, Find and Connect, Anthony was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia in May and is currently undergoing 6 months of intensive treatment. We are wishing Anthony the speediest of recoveries and looking forward to seeing his cheeky personality back at Open Place as soon as possible.

In July, we farewelled our Coordinator of Coordinated Support, Lesley Jones after almost 9 years at Open Place. We thank Lesley for her commitment to Open Place and the Forgotten Australian journey and know she will be missed by many. In addition to her work in Coordinated Support, Lesley prepared many wonderful meals for us, and she was the 'Quiz extraordinaire' although some of you who visit the Drop-In are challenging this title.

As a result of staff leave, illness and staff change we have seen our wait lists increase across our programs. We thank you for your patience while we work through these as quickly as we can.

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We're going green

Want to get this newsletter as soon as possible *and* help the environment? We can email you future editions instead of sending them via snail mail. Contact us to opt in to email newsletters:

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

The Open Place suite of services is funded by the Victorian Government Department of Health and Human Services and the Australian Government Department of Social Services.



In September, after a flight cancellation, hotel evacuation and power outage leaving me stuck in a lift for almost one hour, I attended the Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA) forum in Darwin with your Victorian Forgotten Australian member Maree Holt. This was the first time the AFA had visited Darwin for a forum, and it was wonderful to share time with service users in Darwin and our Find and Connect colleagues, especially during our visit to the Durack Community Arts Centre to share morning tea and a quiz activity. The service in the Northern Territory (NT) is very small as funding is limited. The AFA is actively supporting the NT in pursuit of increased funding for services.



The next AFA forum will be in April 2026 in Melbourne, and is planned to coincide with the National Aged and Community Care Roundtable for Forgotten Australians International Care Experience Forum. Updates will be provided in the next newsletter.

If you are interested to learn more about AFA, their website has been updated and can be found at <https://www.forgottenaustralians.org.au/>

Whilst in Darwin I had the joy of watching my Pies beat the Crows in one of the AFL finals. Sadly, that joy didn't carry forward to the Grand Final, but there's always next year!

Congratulations to the Lions and those that follow them. The Drop-In was adorned with footy flags and streamers during the finals with much rivalry and frivolity.

Open Place has 2 events coming up as the year comes to an end with the launch of our Community Education Report which many of you have contributed to and the annual Christmas Party at the Malvern Town Hall.

I look forward to seeing some of you at these events and for those I don't see, I wish you all the best for Christmas and New Year. May they be filled with much kindness and peace for us all.

Michelle McDonald



Have your contact details changed?

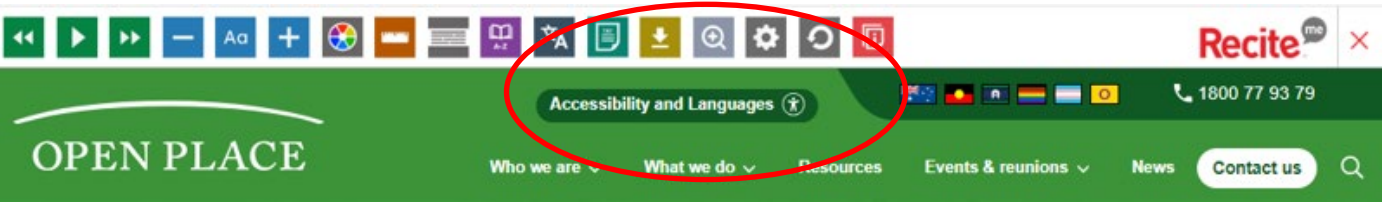
If you have had a recent change of address, email or phone number – please check with reception to see if we have your current details on file.

Important dates to note

Monday 3 November 2025	Open Place will be closed on Melbourne Cup Day eve.
Tuesday 4 November 2025	Open Place will be closed on Melbourne Cup Day.
Friday 12 December 2025	There will be no Cook-Up or Drop-In as we will be preparing for the Christmas Party at the Malvern Town Hall on Saturday 13 December.
Friday 19 December 2025	This is the last Cook-Up for 2025.
Wednesday 24 December 2025	Open Place closes for 2025.
Monday 5 January 2026	Open Place services re-open for 2026. Please note the Drop-In is still closed this week.
Tuesday 13 January 2026	Drop-In re-opens for 2026.
Friday 30 January 2026	First Cook-Up for 2026.

Open Place website

We’re committed to supporting people from different backgrounds, and with different identities and experiences. This includes making sure that information on our website can be accessed and understood. This is a reminder that information on our website can be accessed using the accessibility and languages toolbar.



This toolbar offers different ways to change how our website looks so that it may better meet your individual needs.

You can use the toolbar to:

- read text out loud
- download an audio file of the text being read out loud
- change the font, font size and colours
- turn on rulers and text masks to help you focus on specific parts of the screen
- look up what certain words mean in the dictionary
- remove all the design elements and view the text and links only



- make parts of the screen bigger with the magnifying glass
- change all the writing to a different language
- access a user guide which explains how the toolbar works.

Former residents' reunions

Box Hill Boys Home Reunion

Date: 22 November 2025 from 12 noon to 2pm

Venue: Windy Hill Social Club. Cnr Napier & Brewster St, Essendon VIC 3040

For more information call Ray on 0427 332 584 or 03 5390 2338 and leave a message.

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 Joseph's Receiving Home, Carlton
- St Vincent de Paul Boys' Home, South Melbourne
- St Vincent de Paul Girls' Home, South Melbourne
- St Catherine's Orphanage, Geelong
- St Augustine's Orphanage, Geelong

The Christmas Party for Former Residents will be held on Tuesday 9 December, 11am – 3pm, at MacKillop Family Services in South Melbourne.

Please contact them on (03) 9699 9177 or at enquiry@mackillop.org.au to register for the Connect newsletter.

You'll also find this information on the Open Place website: openplace.org.au/external-events



Open Place Christmas Party

2025

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

We would love to see you and your plus 1, however places are limited so please let us know if you'd like to come by Friday 5th December on (03) 9421 6162 or free call 1800 779 379



When: Saturday 13th December 2025

Time: 10am – 3pm



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

RSVP's 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)



Team updates

Community Education team

Richard Dove, Coordinator Community Education

Greetings to all **Forgotten Australians**. I appreciate this opportunity to give you an update on what has been happening in the world of Community Education at Open Place.

As you know, it's my role to raise awareness of the history and needs of **Forgotten Australians** across Victoria, with a focus on trying to get better outcomes for you. Up until now, most Victorians still don't know the term **Forgotten Australian**, or the history of those who grew up in Australia's child institutions; the abuses; and the effects that are still present today. But they need to know. We *must* believe it is possible that all Victorians will know.

So, what is happening?

You will remember from previous newsletters, I travelled around to all 13 social support groups (SSGs) across rural, regional and metropolitan Victoria, and consulted with everyone attached to those groups, asking, 'What does the world need to know about **Forgotten Australians**?' – or words to that effect. Some of you also contacted me individually, by phone, or email, or by post. With the help of many, using your words, I put together a report titled '**to be seen**' Community Education Report and Priorities, which will be launched at Open Place on 12 November 2025.

The report is made up mostly of the comments of Forgotten Australians. From those comments, 6 priorities (focuses) are drawn. Those 6 priorities will be the ongoing focus of Open Place Community Education – representing what you asked for. The number one priority is, **that all Victorians will come to know who the Forgotten Australians are**. As I said, we *must* believe this is possible. It is the number one thing you asked for – which is why the report is titled, '**to be seen**'.

We are printing 1,500 copies of the report to share with you and with service providers across Victoria. The report will also be available on the Open Place website after the launch.

So, what else has been happening?

Well, for the past 3 months, I've been rolling out the FARE program: Forgotten Australian Resource Education, getting around the state of Victoria once more, heading to all 13 SSGs and delivering the new **Supporting Forgotten Australians** resource, to help you identify as a Forgotten Australian when attending a service. Your words.

If you don't go to a SSG but would like this resource sent to you, please reach out to info@openplace.org.au (Attention Richard Dove) and I will send it to you. You can also download a copy by visiting www.openplace.org.au/resources

While handing out the Supporting Forgotten Australians flyer at SSGs, I've been updating everyone on what is happening with the report. I've also taken the opportunity to meet one-on-one with individual Forgotten Australians identified to me as being 'active' advocates over the years, endeavouring to get better outcomes for all Forgotten Australians. I call them **Active Forgotten Australians**, and they will be part of the strategy in helping Forgotten Australians '**to be seen**' and known, in Victoria.

Although we use the term, **Forgotten Australians**, we know that not everyone feels this term represents them. I want to acknowledge this, because even though most of you are accepting of



this term, some really don't like it, and say that this term doesn't represent them. While no single term will ever perfectly describe everyone, Open Place has adopted this one based on service user feedback and because it's one that's widely accepted by many Forgotten Australians. It was also used during the 2004 Senate Inquiry and in the National Apology by former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd AC; and it is the one I've found most of you, who were in care prior to 1990, accept as a representative term for this community. In getting the word out to all Victorians, I will, when possible, always acknowledge that there are other terms, such as Care Leavers, and Pre-1990 Care Leavers, and more. This is also acknowledged in the 'to be seen' report.

So, what else can I tell you?

Well, I've given a few presentations, which seem to be making an impact. These presentations have spanned nurses, healthcare, emergency services and palliative care. I also have some upcoming education opportunities, which I'm hoping will also create change.

Recently, I travelled to Ararat and gave a presentation about Forgotten Australians to the Ararat Anglican Men's Group. Many are non-Anglicans but were invited to join the group after giving presentations. Anyway, they were very interested in Forgotten Australians, which is great, and many of them are in positions of influence around the town. One in the group was a reporter for the Ararat Advocate Newspaper, so the presentation and information about Forgotten Australians ended up in the next edition.

I am also supporting a Forgotten Australian living in Gippsland who is organising a presentation for **all** Forgotten Australians living in her town; those who don't know they are a Forgotten Australian – or haven't come forward yet. I will be going along to support her and provide a presentation about the services of Open Place.

Lots more has been happening, but I've only got so much space to write. By the time of the next newsletter, the report launch will have taken place, so I will let you know how it goes.

Until next time,
Richard



Historical Records team

The Records team are thinking of our Coordinator Anthony and wishing him well on his journey back to better health.

Emma, Lydia and Siobhan, based at the Open Place office in Richmond, with Sharon also working in Records and Family Search in Ballarat, are dedicated to working through your requests for assistance to find records, and to search for family. We thank you for being so patient; it has been a particularly busy time with an increased interest in records searches.

We work on your behalf, with the Record-Holder agencies, to leave no stone unturned in the search for records from the former Children's Homes and placements. We keep up to date with the collections of records that State and non-State agencies are managing, as they continue to update their archives and their heritage services.

You may be familiar with the Find and Connect website: www.findandconnect.gov.au It is an excellent website covering the history of out-of-home-care in Australia. The website provides histories, timelines, and photos of the former Homes, and includes contact details for the current Record-Holder agencies with responsibility for making sure the records are kept safe, and most importantly, accessible to you.

The State Government also have a website called Finding Records <https://www.vic.gov.au/finding-records>, which includes information about all the records they look after in their archives, and continue to work on making them accessible to you.

Coordinated Support team

We apologise that there have been unprecedented delays in responding to Coordinated Support requests.

We have had a series of staff on lengthy annual leave or extended sick leave and staff movements in recent months. This has created an unexpected delay in being able to respond to requests as soon as we would normally.

We are working through these as quickly as we can, in order of when we received the request.

We appreciate your patience and understanding.

There are 2 Victorian Government schemes available currently to assist with utility costs – the first scheme is called the Victorian Energy Compare; the second scheme is called the Utility Relief Grant Scheme. Please see the information on the next page. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Coordinated Support team for assistance.



Victorian Energy Compare



A new round of the Power Saving Bonus is now available for Victorian households with an eligible concession card.

You applied for a previous round of the Power Savings Bonus program.

Based on the information you provided, you may also be eligible for this new round, which provides a \$100 payment to eligible concession card households.

To check your eligibility and to submit an application, please visit compare.energy.vic.gov.au.

For more information visit the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page.

Kind Regards,

Victorian Energy Compare



 Take charge. Save on bills.

UTILITY RELIEF GRANT SCHEME

Relief grants for paying overdue energy or water bills are available to low-income Victorians experiencing unexpected hardship.

What is the grant?

The grant provides help to pay a mains electricity, gas or water bill that is overdue due to a temporary financial crisis.

Who can apply for the grant?

An account holder who has one of the following eligible concession cards:

- Pensioner Concession Card
- Health Care Card
- Veterans' Affairs Gold Card.



If you don't have one of these cards but are part of a low-income household, you may also be able to apply. Your retailer will ask you some questions to check if you are eligible before issuing a form.

The grant is available to renters and homeowners.

What are the criteria for the grant?

You must show that you have no way of paying the account without assistance and are at risk of disconnection, **and**

you must meet **one** of the following criteria:

- You or someone in your house has experienced family violence.
- You have had a recent decrease in income, for example, lost your job.
- You have had high unexpected costs for essential items.
- The cost of shelter is more than 30% of your household income.

How much is the grant?

The amount of the grant is based on the amount you owe at the time of application. It is also based on the reasons you have given for applying in your application form.

You can receive a maximum of \$650 on each utility type in a two-year period (or \$1,300 for households with a single source of energy (for example, electricity only).

You can apply for separate grants for each utility (electricity, gas and water).

How do I apply for the grant?

Phone your electricity, gas or water retailer to request an application.

Your retailer will ask you some preliminary questions before starting your application.

The application can be completed online, or your retailer will post you a paper form to complete. A friend, support worker or financial counsellor can help you complete the application.

More information

Phone your electricity, gas or water retailer or the Concessions Information Line on 1800 658 521.



Health team

Just a few friendly reminders for health:

1. If you are sending in receipts for reimbursement, we do need to have your current bank account details on file. If you are unsure if we have this information on file, then please provide your BSB and Account Details with the receipt(s).
2. We have set a limit of \$600 for costs related to optical. Please note that optical costs come out of your standard health funding (\$1250 per financial year).
3. If you are planning to use your health funding to cover the cost of an appointment i.e. for dental – please let us know 1-2 weeks in advance so we have plenty of time to set this up for you. This also gives us time to confirm that you have the available funding to cover the cost of the appointment.
4. Unfortunately, with medical appointments that incur a Medicare rebate – we are unable to make third party payments. In these instances, you would need to pay upfront, and we can reimburse these costs.
5. **Please have any invoices for reimbursement to us by Monday 15 December, to ensure payment is processed before the Christmas break.**

Counselling team

Our recent workshop

The counselling team ran a successful half-day workshop in August, on the theme of personal boundaries. The feedback from participants was very positive, with comments including:

- ‘Very helpful and informative, glad I attended.’
- ‘I feel very safe and confident, to talk and be heard.’
- ‘Excellent- helped clarify some of my understandings.’
- ‘It was a very good workshop- well worthwhile.’
- ‘The facilitators were clear and explained well, very helpful and informative.’

We plan to offer further workshops in future – watch this space (and the website) for updates.





The Open Place counselling program – How it works

Free counselling is available at Open Place for Forgotten Australians — in person, online, or over the phone. We have 2 female counsellors and one male counsellor, and sessions move at your pace in a safe, supportive space.

Open Place also funds counselling with private practitioners for Forgotten Australians and family members (counsellors who do not work for us directly but agree to charge Open Place for your sessions).

If you'd like to chat or find out more, we're here for you. Get in touch to make an appointment.

Open Place can also fund a range of suitably qualified external providers

Counselling can be accessed

- In your local area
- At our Richmond offices
- Over the phone via telehealth
- Online via video services such as Zoom

If you are interested in counselling, call or email Open Place and a member of the counselling team will contact you to discuss your situation so that we can find the right counsellor for you.

This includes practitioners such as:

- Counsellors
- Psychologists
- Equine therapists
- Social workers (including mental health social workers)
- Art therapists

It is important to know that we generally cannot reimburse you for sessions with a counsellor that you have already paid for. We first need to approve and set up an agreement with them to bill us directly.

For more information get in touch by calling 1800 779 379 and ask to speak with a member of the counselling team. We will usually get back to you within 1-2 working days.

Additional Counselling Support – CPC Scheme

If you have accepted an offer from the National Redress Scheme or the newly begun Victorian Redress Scheme, you and your family members may be able to access funding for additional counselling through the Counselling and Psychological Care Scheme (CPC). For more information you can speak to a member of the counselling team at Open Place or call the CPC Scheme directly on 1800 716 869.

External Counselling Forums

We run quarterly online forums with the external counsellors Open Place works with across the country. These forums have been a great space for counsellors to learn more about supporting Forgotten Australians and their family members. Any private practitioner working with Forgotten Australians with an Open Place counselling agreement can attend. Please contact

openplacecounselling@openplace.org.au



Mental health crisis support

Open Place is not a crisis service and we are unable to provide immediate crisis response. 24/7 mental health support is available through Lifeline 13 11 14, and Beyond Blue 1300 224 636.

Full Stop Australia offers free, 24/7, confidential, trauma specialist counselling to people of all genders who have been subject to sexual, domestic and family violence, as well as their friends, colleagues and family members. Call 1800 385 578 or visit <https://fullstop.org.au/>

If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call 000.

Additional services that offer immediate support can be found at www.rav.org.au/resources/mental-health-services

Redress Support team

National Redress Support Service

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 National Redress Scheme 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.

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.

The NRS will accept applications up until June 2027. 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. The NRS provides regular updates on the scheme at their website <https://www.nationalredress.gov.au/>.

For example, the most recent update from July 2025 reported there have been 63,995 applications to the Scheme in total. Of these, 22,721 applicants have had their outcomes advised with payments totalling approximately \$1.7 billion dollars.

Our team at Open Place 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. If you would like to discuss your eligibility and what assistance we can provide, please contact Open Place and ask for support with National Redress.



Drop-In Centre

Friday Cook-Up

Every Friday, enjoy 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.

Free activities

- **Women's 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.
- **Podiatry (Foot Care):** Offered every third Wednesday of the month from 1pm to 3pm – Bookings required.
- **Tuesday Fun Walk:** Every Tuesday from 1pm.
- **Movie Thursday:** First Thursday of the month from 1pm.
- **Art Zone:** Every Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm
- **Victorian Public Tenants Association:** First Thursday of the month from 11am to 12.30pm

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



Social support groups (SSG)

Bacchus Marsh SSG

Bacchus Marsh SSG recently have had some game days at the Darley Community Centre, trying our luck at Bingo. More recently we have had a fun day out bowling in Melton. We are all looking forward to more groups for the year ahead.



Ballarat SSG

The Ballarat SSG meets on the second Tuesday of each month (Not January). Our home base for catchups and lunch is the RSL Hall on the corner of Beverin and Birdwood Avenue Sebastopol.

The past 3 months: In July we had an outing to the pictures in Delacombe, followed by lunch. In August we had our normal catch up at the RSL Hall with lunch. September, we had an outing to the 'Flying Horse' bistro in Redan.

Over the next 3 months we plan to have a meeting in October at the RSL Hall. In November we have a tentative plan to go to the Halls Gap Zoo. This is yet to be confirmed. We will send flyers to our group members. Our December Christmas lunch will be on Monday 8 December at the Ballarat Golf Club. New members are welcome.



Bendigo SSG

The Bendigo SSG gets together at the Long Gully Community Centre bi-monthly on the third Thursday of every month (except January) and 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 June our group met at the Long Gully Community Centre where we enjoyed sharing lunch together and eating Dolly's yummy homemade cream cakes. Those present also voted on what outings they would like to do in the coming months.

In July we went to Thailand – well, not really, but we did 'do lunch' at a local Thai restaurant. It was a wet and windy day, but everyone put on their raincoats and left the warmth of their home to come together and enjoy some delicious food. Rose from the Richmond office joined us on the day and was given a warm 'welcome back' by the friendly gang.

In August we were back at Long Gully Community Centre where Richard (Coordinator Community Education) from the Richmond office came to update us on his progress with meeting with and educating organisations about Forgotten Australians.

In September we went to the Bendigo RSL for lunch – it was a good day out together and the food was good too! In October we are back at the Long Gully Community Centre to have our usual catch-up, share a nice lunch (and hopefully Dolly's delights), and discuss our big day out in November at Echuca. In December we are booked in for lunch at the Axedale Hotel. If you wish to come along and haven't been before, please give Annie a call.





Dandenong SSG

We had a lovely lunch at the Noble Park RSL on Wednesday 24 September. There was only 14 of us, plus Open Place staff, Kristine and Richard. The food was great and VERY generous in size. Quite a few take-away containers were needed.

Ron Cook won the best dressed in footy colours award. All those dressed in footy colours were asked to parade on the dance floor. Ron did a very impressive and very loud 'Cairn the pies!' – which did amuse the judges and other diners.

We also had 2 lucky door prizes to be won – Ron managed to win one of these (which he promised to share with his wife, Sally).

Richard presented the new Supporting Forgotten Australians information sheet. It was very informative listening to Richard; quite a lot of people had questions and gave positive feedback.





Donald and District SSG

The Donald and District SSG meets bi-monthly, on the fourth Thursday of the month. Our group members come from a wide-ranging rural area including St Arnaud, Donald, Beulah and Horsham. In July we had lunch at the Donald Hotel, and in September, we enjoyed lunch at the Palace Hotel in Warracknabeal.

Our next outing will be in Halls Gap on 27 November 2025. This is our last meeting for the year before we break up for Christmas period. We are planning a visit to Halls Gap for lunch and then a visit to the Halls Gap Zoo to meet the giraffes!





Frankston SSG

The Frankston SSG has had a cracking good time of late! In August we all got together for lunch at Café La Wheels in Seaford. Nostalgia filled the air in this retro inspired diner as we all enjoyed a lunch back in time. Richard, Open Place's Community Education Coordinator, attended our meeting at the library in September, presenting the newly launched info sheet he's designed for Forgotten Australians to use when engaging with services and the community. October saw our SSG head to the high seas as we all took the ferry from Sorrento to Queenscliff.

The Frankston SSG runs on the first Friday of every month. If you're interested in attending please contact Open Place reception and let us know!





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 Social Support Group, please give Annie a call on 0427 695 600 (Monday to Thursday).

In June we met at the Grovedale Neighbourhood House where we enjoyed a lovely lunch and had a meeting to discuss and make plans for the coming new financial year. We've been to the Shell Club in Corio in the past and it was good every time, so we returned in July! It was a big turnout, and the day was enjoyed by all. August was back at Grovedale for a catch up and lunch.

In September we tried somewhere new, and it didn't disappoint – we went to the Ponds Hotel in Waurin Ponds. The food was good – we shall return! It was a wet and windy day, but it didn't deter those from coming along. In October we are back at Grovedale and in November we are off to the Werribee Zoo to see the elephants (and more). In December we are going to the Leopold Sportsman's Club for lunch. If you haven't been to the Geelong SSG and thinking about it, give Annie or Sonya a call.





Gippsland SSG

Over the last couple of months, the Gippsland group has had lunch in Heyfield, at the Railway Hotel. The food is always much enjoyed at this venue and is a regular on our calendar. Last month we had lunch at the Sale Rainbow Chinese Restaurant, and our photos show that it was a happy day, filled with much chatter and laughter. In between outings we continue to meet at the Sale City Band Hall, which accommodates our increasing group size perfectly. We have been very lucky to welcome new group members over the last few months, and it is great to see them settling in well and being so warmly welcomed by the group. In October we will be having sandwiches and cake in the gardens, out to lunch at the Sale RSL in November and then finishing the year off with lunch out for Christmas.





Horsham SSG

The Horsham Social Support Group had a wonderful gathering at the Victoria Hotel on 25 September 2025.

Everyone was in good spirits and there were some enjoyable conversations. The food at 'The Vic' is always delicious, and the owners are friendly and accommodating. Last time we were there, Phillip gave the owner of the pub one of the new Supporting Forgotten Australian flyers. I think this is a great step forward in building understanding of the needs of Forgotten Australians, and the staff knowing why we meet there.

We only have 2 more meetings before the end of the year, and then there is the big Christmas event at Malvern Town Hall in December. Some are deciding whether they will come along. It's a long way to go, but it'd be great to see many of our group come along.





Preston SSG

The Preston SSG has welcomed a few new members over the past few months. It's been lovely to meet everyone as well as welcome back existing attendees. The group has always been and remains a warm, welcoming environment for all.

In June we visited Scienceworks, which was both interesting and interactive. The group particularly enjoyed the tour of the pumping station. We then celebrated Christmas in July at the Croxton Hotel in Thornbury, where we had some very creative Christmas outfits to follow the month's theme! In August, the group met for lunch at the Preston Library. Richard, our Community Education Coordinator joined us to discuss his projects and gather suggestions and ideas from group members around ongoing community work. We'd like to thank the group members for their input. The September outing saw a large group of us enjoying a lunch at the Edwardes Lake Hotel in Reservoir.



We'd like to acknowledge the passing of long-time group member, Alison. Alison was a warm, welcoming, and spirited member of the Preston group and she will be remembered fondly and missed. Our condolences go out to Alison's brother, Gordon, another valued group member as he navigates this difficult time – our thoughts are with you.





Shepparton SSG

The winter months were spent catching up at the North Shepparton Community and Learning Centre and visiting the region for lunches out.

First stop was the Cricketeers Arms in Mooroopna for lunch in July; it was a cold day out, but we were warmed up with chatter and laughs over lunch together. The meals served were enormous and enjoyed by all.

Our Community Education Coordinator, Richard, joined the group in August to discuss the Forgotten Australian information flyer, which is a helpful resource to provide to your GP and other health and community services that you attend. Thanks, Richard, for joining; it was a great opportunity for those attending on the day to chat about community education in the region.

In September, the beautiful canola fields were in full bloom in the region and the group got together for a lovely lunch at the Mooroopna Golf Club; meals were excellent and the company even better! The group are back to the Community Centre in October for a catch up and to plan next couple of gatherings.

We look forward to the weather warming up and to marking the end of the year together with plans for a Christmas lunch.



Thanks everyone for your continued support of the group and each other.



Warrnambool SSG

The Warrnambool comes together on the first Wednesday of every month (except January). We have a lovely space at the Archie Graham Centre in Warrnambool where we catch up, share some lunch together and sometimes have a guest speaker or do an activity. On the alternate month, we go out for lunch or do an activity that's been chosen by the group. 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). New members are most welcome or if you've been to the group in the past and want to come back, the door is always open.

In June we caught up with one another at the Archie Graham Centre where we discussed 'where to go and what to do' in the new financial year.

In July we ventured down the road to the Allansford Hotel where we enjoyed a good feed on a cold winter's day. We were back to Archie Graham in August for a catch up and lunch together.

In September we returned to Allansford, but this time we went to Cheese World (we've been there before and enjoyed it so much we had to go back). Emma from the Richmond office broke away from the city to join Sharon and the group where she enjoyed meeting the Warrnambool gang and seeing some of the sights of the 'shipwreck coast'. October was back at Archie Graham where it was agreed that in November, we would return to Tower Hill for a picnic/barbeque. In December we are going to the Warrnambool RSL for lunch. If you live in the Warrnambool area and would like to join in, please give us a call.





Wodonga/Wangaratta SSG

July took us to the Vine hotel for a lovely meal. The Vine has become a bit of a regular event over the years, and the staff there always make sure we are well looked after.

We had our annual trip to the cinemas in August. This year it was up, up, and away for the very popular Superman movie, which the group enjoyed.

September brought us back to our new 'home base' at Wangaratta Victory Community Hall, where Helen has always made sure we feel welcome. The group heard an update from the Open Place Community Education worker Richard, who shared the findings from his recent conversations with many Forgotten Australians. While this was a difficult conversation for some, it was also good for everyone to hear that their ideas will shape the plans to raise awareness about Forgotten Australians in the wider community.



Chicken and spinach pasta salad



Serves 6.

Ingredients

- 500g Diced Butternut Pumpkin
- 625g Spinach and Ricotta Tortellini
- 120g Baby Spinach Leaves
- 1 hot roast chicken, skin and bones removed, meat coarsely torn
- 150g Basil Pesto

Method

Step 1

Preheat oven to 200°C. Line a baking tray with baking paper. Place the pumpkin on the tray and spray with olive oil spray. Bake, turning occasionally, for 20-25 mins or until tender and golden brown.

Step 2

Meanwhile, cook tortellini in a large saucepan of boiling water following packet directions. Drain.

Step 3

Place the pumpkin, tortellini, spinach, chicken and pesto in a large bowl. Toss to combine. Divide among serving bowls.



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:
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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 First Nations peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands and waterways of Australia. We support their right to self-determination and culturally safe services.



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