

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 44 | June 2024

Reflections on our year so far

It's hard to believe we are already at the start of Winter, with the Autumnal leaves starting to fall and the sun setting earlier now that daylight savings has ended.

We are happy to let you know that we have increased our Drop-In Centre availability. It is now open 3 days per week on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays.

We also offer appointments between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday or if you are in the area, you are welcome to pop in.

On 8 February, the Victorian Government delivered its second Apology to Forgotten Australians/Pre-1990 Care Leavers. The lead up to the day and the actual Apology was a very emotional time for many people and we recognise that it impacted you all in different ways (read more on page 3).

Open Place is delighted to have 3 new staff, Kim joining the Records team as co-ordinator and Sonya and Ebba, joining our Coordinated Support team for 6 months to support the increased service demand arising from the Advance Redress Payments (previously called Hardship Payments) Scheme.

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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

A snapshot of our service users

From time to time, I am asked how many people use the services of Open Place, so I thought I would provide a quick snapshot for you below.

As of 30 December 2023:

Total service users	Aged 50 and under	Aged 51-79
5,038	1,007	3,607

Our numbers are always growing and in March 2024, we registered 36 new service users.

I hope you can stay warm throughout the chilly winter months.

Michelle McDonald
Senior Manager Open Place

Retirement announcement: Di's time to relax and rejuvenate

After many years with VANISH and 8 years with Open Place, Diane (Di) Jacobson has called that it's time for some relaxation and rejuvenation away from work. Di would be known to many of you for her persistent and thorough record searching for individuals and to enable family reconnections and reunions, her dance moves at the Christmas parties, and her general joyful and engaging manner at the Drop-In and the Dandenong Social Support Group. Di was a treasured member of the Open Place team who will be missed by all who know her. We wish her well for all the future holds.



Welcome to Open Place

Kim, Coordinator Historical Care Records

Hi everyone. My name is Kim and I've recently joined Open Place as Coordinator of the Records Team. My work experience expands across multiple aspects of child welfare in both Victoria and NSW. Working with children and families has presented me with many unique challenges and highlights over the years.

Other highlights for me are my 2 cats; a 5-year-old white male cat named Lumi (which means snow in Finnish) and 2-year-old female cat named Liquorice (who is, of course, a black cat). They are the best of friends, although weren't so much when they first met. One is cheekier than the other too... any idea which one? Feel free to let me know who you think it is, as I am always happy to talk about my cats and show off photos of their antics.



Since arriving at Open Place, I have been encouraged and amazed by everyone, and I feel privileged to have the opportunity to work here and be part of the service.

Victorian Government Apology

On 8 February, the Victorian Government delivered its second Apology to Forgotten Australians/Pre-1990 Care Leavers. Open Place was allocated places for 70 people to attend the event at Parliament House and we undertook a ballot process to distribute this allocation. To support Forgotten Australians on the day, we also live streamed the Apology at our Richmond Drop-In Centre and a location in Wangaratta, and we attended the Sale and Ballarat events hosted by the Victorian Government.

We recognise that the Apology impacted people in different ways and offer our ongoing support to Forgotten Australians around these events. A copy of the Apology is on display at our Drop-In Centre in Richmond, and is available to read or watch online at:

<https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/news/general-news/careleaversapology/>

Redress Scheme and Advance Redress Payments

Open Place does not have any additional information about the **Victorian Government's upcoming Redress Scheme** for people who experienced child abuse and neglect while in institutional care, as it is still in the design phase. We expect further information to be released in the coming months and will provide updates on our website and in our newsletter when available.

Advance Redress Payments (previously called Hardship Payments) are now available prior to the start of Victorian Governments Redress Scheme.

To be eligible for a one-off \$10,000 Advance Redress Payment, a person abused or neglected as a child in Victorian institutional care will need to:

- have been placed in Victorian institutional care for 6 months or more before 1990
- have a terminal or critical illness.

To apply, you or your nominated support person (or organisation) will need to fill in an application form and have your doctor complete the medical statement form. Identity documents will also need to be provided.

For more information and access to the application forms:

- visit <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/advance-redress-payments> or
- email VictorianGovernmentRedressScheme@dffh.vic.gov.au

The **support team at Open Place can also assist you** to fill in the forms or answer any questions you may have about Advance Redress Payments. Call us on 1800 779 379.

Beware of misleading websites, text messages and social media accounts

We are aware of a number of unauthorised websites, text messages and social media accounts sharing misleading and inaccurate information about the National Redress Scheme. Some of these may appear as search results through web browsers.

You should not click on links from these websites or texts or provide personal information that may put you at risk.

These unauthorised sources include misinformation about:

- Eligibility for the National Redress Scheme
- Availability of \$3000 redress payment through Centrelink
- A new 'one off' or 'bonus' payment for Age Pension customers
- Welfare payments from other countries
- Pictures of government officials

There may be additional messages sent which relate to Services Australia payments and eligibility.

Please be mindful if you receive one of these scams, contact Open Place **1800 779 379** or the National Redress Scheme **1800 737 377** if you are unsure.

For more information, please visit <http://www.nationalredress.gov.au>

Blue Knot Foundation educational workshops

Blue Knot is offering FREE educational workshops for family, friends and loved ones of adult survivors of childhood trauma.

Who is Blue Knot?

Blue Knot is the National Centre of Excellence for Complex Trauma. They advocate for and provide support to people who have experiences of complex trauma, and those who support them, personally and professionally.

You can call the Blue Knot Helpline on 1300 657 380. This service operates from 9am-5pm AEST/AEDT, 7 days a week including public holidays. You can also email helpline@blueknot.org.au

About the workshop

If you are supporting a survivor of childhood trauma, this workshop is for you. It will provide you with some of the knowledge and tools you will need to provide good support, as well as to look after yourself.

By attending this workshop, you will learn about providing trauma-informed support, which is a compassionate approach to supporting people with trauma experiences. This workshop will share knowledge about how stress can affect children as they develop, and how the biological stress response can still affect people later in life, including what may trigger them and how. You will also be given strategies to help you understand and support survivors on their recovery journey while paying attention to your own self-care.

Who should attend?

Partners, friends, family and loved ones of adults who have experienced any form of childhood trauma and/or abuse.

Upcoming sessions

- 15 June 2024 – Virtual classroom (Delivered via Zoom)

Register online:

<https://blueknot.org.au/supporters/supporter-workshops/>

Finding Family. Heritage Service workshop on family searching.

The Open Place Records team are available to assist you with the search for records of your time in care and for family members you were separated from.

Should you or your family be interested in learning about how to do some of this research yourself, the following 'Finding Family' workshop being provided by the **Uniting Heritage Service** could be of interest to you. The Uniting Heritage Service can also assist you directly if you were in care at a Uniting Home.

Finding Family is a one-day workshop to help people seeking family, known or unknown.

Are some close members in your family unknown to you? Are you seeking family that you know about and can't find? Do you have unanswered questions about your own and your family's past?

Have you or members of your family experienced adoption or out of home care and have questions about family history?

Finding Family is a general overview and is not designed to provide detailed, in-depth searching.

Handouts on useful resources and planning guide will be provided to you.

Members of the Uniting Heritage Service will be present as will the Genealogical Society of Victoria who will explain how they can assist in your search.

The workshop will cover:

- The history of adoption and out of home care in Victoria
- How to obtain records of your family member
- How to plan a family search project
- Privacy and ethical considerations in your search
- Key resources for family searching
- Using DNA in your search, and
- How to conduct and organise your search

Date: Saturday 27th July 2024

Time: 9.30am – 4pm

Venue: Uniting, Level 4/130 Lonsdale St, Melbourne

Cost: \$100

RSVP: 24th July to Catriona Milne **0402 969 621** or catriona.milne@vt.uniting.org

Lunch will be provided.

Learn more at unitingvictas.org.au/heritage-service

Former resident's reunions

Sutherland Homes for Children

Open Place service user Paul Starling is looking to connect with anyone who was in the Sutherland Homes for Children during the Second World War. Miss Evans was the Matron during this time.

If you remember Paul (also known at the time as Fred) or his younger brother Valentine/Val 'Maisie' and would like to get in touch, please contact Emma at Open Place on (03) 9421 6162.

Andrew Kerr Children's Home

Open Place service user Lindsay Abson is looking to connect with anyone who was in the Andrew Kerr Children's Home in Mornington between 1952 – 1954.

If you remember Lindsay and would like to get in touch, please contact Emma at Open Place on (03) 9421 6162.

Cafs history & memory centre

The Cafs exhibition which looks at the histories of the Ballarat Orphanage and Ballarat Children's Home will be having an open afternoon where photographs, records, art pieces and memorabilia will be available to view.

The spaces will showcase original paintings from the toddler's block, artefacts from the Ballarat Orphanage and Ballarat Children's home, artworks by former residents and lots of stories about life in the institution.

People can drop in, no booking required.

When: Friday 28th June 2024

Time: 3pm – 5pm

Where: 115 Lydiard Street North, Ballarat VIC 3350



Healing Together

Open Place will be running a 8 week Face-to-Face Therapeutic Support Group for Women.

A group for Forgotten Australian survivors of child sexual abuse registered with Open Place that aims to:

- Foster a group connection based on shared experience.
- Encourage a deeper understanding of self.
- Develop better ways to cope with the impacts of trauma.

When: 8-weekly sessions every Wednesday 2PM to 4PM commencing July 17

Where: Therapeutic space at the drop-in centre, 1/8 Bromham Place, Richmond, Victoria 3121

To express interest call us on **1800 779 379**

or email openplacecounselling@openplace.org.au by Friday June 14



Team updates

Records team

Open Place continues to provide records and family search support for Forgotten Australians. There have been lots of changes to our team this year. In January, Kim joined us as the new coordinator (see page 3), and sadly, just before Easter we farewelled Di (see page 2) who is off to enjoy some much-needed rest and rejuvenation (also known as retirement). We will miss Di dearly and we wish her all the best. Our team now consists of Emma Kitson, Lydia Wasilenko, Siobhan McGuinness, Sharon Guy and Kim Colvin.

We have had a significant increase in our records requests and continue to look forward to assisting you. We ask for your patience, however, as unfortunately it may take longer than usual to return your call, please be assured we will get to you as soon as we can. Unfortunately, wait times for records from the Care Leaver Records Service (Victorian Government Department of

Families, Fairness and Housing), continues to be around 8 months, but they have assured us they are working diligently at reducing this wait time.

We are always happy to chat with you and answer any questions you may have so do not hesitate to call and have a chat to someone from our Records support team.

Health team

Pharmacy

A reminder to everyone accessing the health funding that we **do not reimburse for pharmacy medications** unless you have had to pay for medications upon being discharged from a hospital stay or if prior approval has been provided by a member of the health team.

Open Place health funding is capped at \$1250 per financial year, including for the following high-cost items:

- Off-label usage of Ozempic
- Medicinal marijuana
- Scripted over-the-counter items.

We recommend you are aware of the costs of these items as they can quickly add up.

Reimbursements

Remember to send in your health receipts for reimbursement as soon as you receive them. Please ensure your receipts are for this financial year (1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024) only and dated from 1 July 2023 onwards.

Please note: After 30 June 2024, we cannot accept any receipts for reimbursement from expenses before this date.

Optical / glasses

A reminder that Open Place will contribute \$600 towards glasses/frames/lenses (as per the health funding guidelines). If the cost is over \$600, you will be responsible for the outstanding amount owing.

Please remember that the **health funding is not allocated based on a funding per person basis**. It is a block of funding that we apply guidelines to, to share the funding for those in need as equitably as possible.

Counselling team

Open Place continues to provide and fund counselling support for Forgotten Australians and family members. People most commonly think of counselling as 'talk therapy' with a psychologist, social worker, or psychotherapist, and lots of people find this helpful. However, this might not always suit everyone and there are other forms of therapy like art therapy and music therapy, animal assisted therapy and many forms of body-based therapies that Open Place can pay for.

The first step in arranging counselling through Open Place is usually to speak with one of our counsellors. They will talk with you about your situation, discuss your hopes for counselling, and

any specific requirements (such as the gender of the counsellor, or a particular approach to counselling/therapy you are interested in).

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.

Open Place can help you find a suitable counsellor in most regions of Australia or even overseas, or you might already have found a counsellor you want to work with. Please be aware that our funding is limited, and Open Place will be able to cover a fixed number of sessions per year. Funding 'rolls over' every financial year, however, for as long as you wish to continue with the counsellor. We will discuss this with you when we are organising the counselling.

We also have a small team of Open Place counsellors based in our offices at Richmond who can offer medium-term counselling (for up to 12 months) face-to-face and/or telehealth sessions. 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.

Just a reminder that anyone who has accepted a Redress offer from the National Redress Scheme is also eligible for counselling as part of their Redress offer. This includes family members. You can contact our counselling team to find out more or contact the Victorian Government Department of Families, Fairness and Housing's Counselling and Psychological Care program directly on 1800 716 869 or email cpc@dffh.vic.gov.au.

If you would like to arrange counselling or find out more, please get in touch with us.

Please note that the Open Place counselling service is not a crisis service - we are appointment based and operate during business hours. Unfortunately, there is not always an Open Place counsellor available to provide an immediate crisis response.

The two main crisis services you can contact for 24/7 mental health support are Lifeline on 13 11 14, and Beyond Blue on 1300 224 636. You can also find an extensive list of telephone and online support services at www.rav.org.au/resources/mental-health-services if you need immediate support.

Redress Support Service

Our Redress Support team assists Forgotten Australians to apply for the National Redress Scheme, 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.

Interest in the National Redress Scheme continues to grow and our team at Open Place are taking new calls every week. We will always get back to people with enquiries within a couple of days – however, please be aware that there is a waiting list and wait times before you will be linked to a Redress support worker. We can try to link you with other Redress Support Services in Victoria with shorter wait times if you'd prefer and will discuss this with you when you call. We have appreciated everyone's patience and understanding during these wait times.

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 well-being 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. We will discuss all your options and make sure you get the best advice for your situation.

Once an application has been completed and sent to the Scheme, it takes on average 13 or 14 months to get an outcome. Outcomes can include a direct financial payment, access to counselling, and a Direct Personal Response (an apology) from a representative of the responsible institutions. The Scheme will accept applications up until June 2027.

If you would like to discuss the National Redress Scheme, who is eligible to apply and what support we can offer, please get in touch with Open Place. You can also visit the Scheme's own website for information: <https://www.nationalredress.gov.au>

Please note that the National Redress Scheme is separate to the Victorian Government Care Leavers Scheme. More details of the Care Leavers Scheme will be shared once available.

We'd also like to take this opportunity to say farewell to Rose, who has been with our Redress support team for the last year and is now leaving to go overseas. Rose has provided professional and compassionate support to many people applying for Redress and has made a positive contribution to the team and Open Place. We wish her all the best as she follows her heart over the ocean!

Drop-In Centre

Free activities

- **Art Group:** Every third Thursday of the month between 1pm and 4pm.
- **Haircuts:** Every 6 weeks on a Tuesday between 11am and 1pm.
- **Podiatry (foot care):** Every third Wednesday of the month between 1pm and 3pm.
- **Men's Walking Group:** Restarting in 2024. Dates to be confirmed.

For activity updates between newsletters, visit <https://www.openplace.org.au/events/>

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.

We are 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 appointments only and all appointments will be 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 their website for more information: <http://threadtogether.org>.

Locations: Richmond, Ballarat, or Wangaratta.

If you are interested to attend at either location or discuss further, please call Open Place 1800 779 379.

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.

Drop-In opening times

Our Richmond Drop-In Centre opening hours are:

Monday: Closed*

Tuesday: 10am – 4pm

Wednesday: Closed*

Thursday: 10am – 4pm

Friday: 10am – 3pm

Weekends: Closed

*Please know that if you need to attend our Richmond centre for any reason on a Monday or Wednesday, we can organise an appointment for you. Please call our reception line in advance and ask to speak to the staff member you would like to meet with. Phone 1800 779 379.

General updates

Have your bank details changed?

If you have changed your bank details, please let us know so we can update them at our end. This will ensure those who have paid for any expenses will be reimbursed in a timely manner to the correct bank account.

Has your address changed?

Please let us know if you've moved and your address needs updating on our system. We want to make sure any mail gets to you including our newsletter if you've opted to receive it via mail.

Our phone number is no longer silent

If you see the number **03 8415 9000** calling on your phone, it's us here at Open Place. We were aware that many people are hesitant to answer 'no caller ID' calls so we've unsilenced our number. Thanks to everyone who gave feedback that contributed to this change. We look forward to speaking to you the next time we call.

Open Place Christmas Party



Social support groups (SSGs)

Gippsland/Sale SSG

The Gippsland group got off to a cracking start to 2024 with a barbeque at the Sale Botanic Gardens. Much to Liz and Shaye's relief, 2 group members cooked the sausages and burgers to perfection which we enjoyed with salads and bread. The sun was shining for us, and the gardens so pretty, a great setting to re-connect for the new year. Our March group was in our home base, and we celebrated Easter together with hot cross buns and Easter eggs. We have welcomed new group members, and it has been wonderful to see people return from illness looking so well. We will finish the first half of 2024 dining at new venues for lunch in Traralgon and Rosedale.



Donald and District SSG

Donald and District SSG meets bimonthly, on the fourth Thursday of the month. Our group members come from a very large area, including Marnoo, St Arnaud, Beulah, Horsham, and Bealiba. Some of our members are quite isolated and do travel quite long distances (up to 2 hours) to get to their group.

As a group we try to spread the outings across this region so that everyone has a chance at a shorter distance to travel.

In the last few months, the group has enjoyed an outing to the Sportsman's Club in St Arnaud, and a lunch at the Creekside Hotel in Warracknabeal. Our next outing is on 27th June at the Donald Hotel. We have Ebba from the Coordinated Support team coming to talk about the advanced redress payment and how the Coordinated Support team can support our rural Service Users. Contact Sharon for more information on 0417 067 910.

Bacchus Marsh SSG

Last month, most of the Bacchus Marsh group came together for a planning day and everyone contributed by providing ideas for the upcoming months. As a result of that meeting we have managed to think outside the box for some fun and different ideas to keep the group interesting, starting next month with a cruise along the Yarra River, and the following month a trip to the Werribee Zoo. We are looking forward to the next few months ahead of us and the activities we have planned.

Preston SSG

The Preston group kicked off the start of 2024 with a picnic in the park at the Malahang Reserve. It was a beautiful, sunny day, and the group had a lot to catch up on since the last gathering in November. We were joined by some furry friends, Molly and Lily, who brought a fun atmosphere to the day.

Our March group saw us experiencing a yummy 2-course meal at the Croxton Hotel in Thornbury, where we enjoyed some good old pub food and chats. There was some enthusiastic discussion and suggestions for activities and outings for the future. The group also recently enjoyed an outing to the Melbourne Museum!

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

Ballarat SSG

The Ballarat SSG enjoyed a barbeque at Lake Wendouree in March. The weather was warm, and the food expertly barbequed by Sharon! In April we will be gathering at our home base, the Sebastopol RSL for a light lunch, and we are lucky to have the lovely Jo in attendance to talk to us about the benefits of meditation, followed by a 10-minute guided meditation.



Sharon and Emma would like to thank all our wonderful group members who make the monthly catchups so enjoyable.

If you would like to attend the Ballarat Social Support Group on the second Tuesday of each month, please contact Open Place on (03) 9421 6162 or 1800 779 379.



Bendigo SSG

We get together at the Long Gully Community Centre on the third Thursday of every second month (except January). Every 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 February, we had a good catchup at the Long Gully Community Centre where we discussed and planned our barbeque lunch for March. Dolly delighted us all yet again with her delicious home baked sweets. As she has done several times in the past, Colleen kindly offered for us to have our March barbeque lunch catch-up at her home in Bendigo. We had a fabulous, sunny day at Colleen's – thanks so much, Colleen, for your kind and welcoming hospitality. David cooked up a storm on the barbeque and several of the crew pitched in and helped serve up a delicious lunch for all to enjoy. We have a few talented folks in the group with Vic singing a few Irish songs, John telling some yarns and jokes, along with Shirley and Dorothy giving us some laughs too. A special day to remember. April took us back to the Long Gully Community Centre.



Geelong SSG

The Geelong group 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 call Annie on 0427 695 600 (Monday to Thursday).

February saw a good turnout at The Grovedale Neighbourhood House for a nice catch-up and lunch together. A big thank you to Judy who spoils our group each month with her delicious home baked cakes and slices.



In March, the morning skies were bluey grey and there was a chill in the air. Our group was to have a barbeque lunch at our ever-popular spot – Eastern Park. Our barbeque went ahead but not without a bit of a drama – the first 4 barbeques were not working! After a phone call to the council to report the non-working barbeques, we realised we needed a ‘plan B’. Rose and Annie set off with the uncooked meat to find a working barbeque. We had a couple of early arrivals, so they held the fort, greeting the gang as they arrived and updating them on why Annie and Rose weren’t present. All ended well with cooked meat, a feast to enjoy by all, the skies turned blue, and the sun shone all afternoon.

April we visited back to the Grovedale Neighbourhood House for a trivia game, cuppa, and light lunch together.

Southwest/Warrnambool SSG

We meet at Archie Graham Centre every second month on the first Wednesday of the month (except January). This year, our starting time will change to 11am or sometimes 12 noon depending on what we are doing that month. Every other month, 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).

February was our first get-together for the year at the Archie Graham Centre where we enjoyed a light lunch, cuppa and good catchup with one another.

In March, we all drove from near and far to meet up at Tea Tree Park in Mortlake for a barbeque lunch and a few games of Bocce. The sun was shining, and the sky was blue – perfect weather for an outdoor catchup and a bit of fun playing Bocce.

In April, we were back at Archie Graham for some more fun, food and games. Give Annie a call at Open Place on 1800 779 379 if you want to come along and check out our group.

As discussed with group members, there was no group in May due to the Warrnambool Race Week. We will be back at Archie in June for another catchup day with cuppas and some lunch.



Wangaratta/Wodonga SSG

The group is back up and running for 2024. The February meeting was a special gathering with the Shepparton group, to view the livestream of the Victorian Government Apology. We met at the Wangaratta Oaks racecourse function room, which was a very spacious and comfortable venue for the occasion and the staff were very welcoming. There were lots of mixed emotions on the day as everybody listened to Victorian Premier, The Honourable Jacinta Allan MP, give a formal apology to Forgotten Australians and other Pre-1990 Care Leavers. While it brought up some difficult feelings and memories, it was also important that people from these regions were able to come together and support each other on such a historically significant day.

The March meeting was a bit more low-key, back at our new Wodonga 'home', the Biralee Neighbourhood House, to plan for the next months ahead. We enjoyed a lovely lunch as the group discussed and voted on outings and activities for the next 6-8 months.

Any Forgotten Australians in the Wodonga or Wangaratta area that would like to find out more about the SSG are welcome to call Munki or Cameron at Open Place on 1800 779 379.

Shepparton SSG

Members of the Shepparton SSG travelled to Wangaratta on 8 February, to view the live stream of the Victorian Government Apology to Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers with members of the Wangaratta and Wodonga SSG.

The groups shared this experience together over a morning tea and lunch at the Wangaratta Conference Centre. It was a moving experience for many while also a nice chance to catch up with familiar friends and meet new people.



In March, we met at the North Shepparton Community and Learning Centre for a catchup and a bit of fun. We played 'Guess the Song', where Di and Siobhan sang a line from familiar songs and left the rest for the group to guess and sing along. It was a lot of loud, lively fun, enjoyed

with a range of fantastic food from the North End Bakery; in particular, their award-winning 'Australia's Best Vanilla Slice'.

Thanks everyone for coming along for the fun and company; we look forward to sharing more experiences together over the coming months.

Frankston SSG

The Frankston February group meeting was held at the library where we decided to have a barbeque for our next outing. As the pictures show we had a lovely sunny day at the picturesque Mornington Park in March. Welcome to the new members who have recently joined the group. We look forward to your input on what our next outings should be.



Dandenong SSG

The Dandenong group meet on the last Wednesday of the month. Our home base is at Edinburgh Hall in Springvale. During the last few months, we have enjoyed spending time together playing fun games and sharing laughs. In February we attended Morning Melodies at Noble Park Football Club, dancing and singing along to the Hit Parade (1950s-1980s). In March, we sadly said farewell to Diane Jacobson, who has co-facilitated the Dandenong group for many years. Di is taking a well-earned retirement and will be very missed by all of us. We welcome Ebba as the new facilitator and hope she can match Di's moves on the dance floor.



Horsham SSG

The Horsham SSG met at the Centre for Participation in Horsham in January to plan for the year. A lively discussion was had while we enjoyed lunch together. The group is keen to get out and about a bit more this year and talked about upcoming activities as well having some information sessions.

Unfortunately, the fires in the Grampians in March interrupted plans to attend the Halls Gap Zoo, but thankfully everyone was safe and sound. Since then, the group has met for lunch at some of the awesome local pubs in the area including the Natimuk Pub and the Victoria Hotel in Horsham. The Natimuk Pub is a favourite of the Horsham SSG and sits in a beautiful location overlooked by Mount Arapiles.

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



Anzac biscuits recipe

Prep: 10 mins

Cook: 10 mins

Serves: 20 cookies

Ingredients

1 cup rolled oats

1 cup plain flour

2/3 cup brown sugar

2/3 cup desiccated coconut

125 grams butter

2 tablespoons golden syrup

2 tablespoons water

½ teaspoon bicarbonate soda



Method

1. Preheat oven to 160 degrees (fan-forced). Grease and line three flat baking trays with baking paper.
2. Combine the rolled oats, flour, brown sugar, and coconut in a bowl.
3. Place butter, golden syrup and 2 tablespoons cold water into a microwave safe bowl and heat until melted.
4. Stir through the bicarbonate of soda.
5. Pour the butter mixture over the oat mixture and stir to combine.
6. Roll level tablespoons of mixture into balls.
7. Place on trays, 5cm apart and flatten slightly.
8. For chewy biscuits, bake for 10-12 minutes or until light golden. For crunchy biscuits, increase cooking time to 12-15 minutes.
9. Leave on the baking trays for 5 minutes before transferring to a wire rack to cool completely.

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.