

When it comes to education,
what do Forgotten Australians
want you to know?

In this report, you'll read
the words of 195 adults who
grew up in Australia's homes,
orphanages and foster homes.

Many of them were physically
and sexually abused, neglected
and abandoned.

What they want most is
to be **understood**;
to be treated with
dignity and **respect**; and

to be seen.



Authors

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About us

Open Place is a support and advocacy service that coordinates and provides direct assistance to people who grew up in Victorian orphanages and homes prior to 1990.

The Open Place suite of services is provided by Relationships Australia Victoria and funded by the Victorian Government Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and the Australian Government Department of Social Services.

openplace.org.au

Relationships Australia Victoria (RAV) is a community-based, not-for-profit organisation with no religious affiliations. We have over 75 years' experience providing family and relationship support services from more than 21 locations across Melbourne and Victoria.

relationshipsaustralia.org.au

Acknowledgements

Open Place acknowledges all the brave Forgotten Australians who contributed to this report. As one individual said, 'I have a fear of bringing things up and looking at things. I get nightmares if I do.'

When Forgotten Australians speak about their past, many people turn their heads away; it is just too difficult to hear. Imagine being the child who had to endure it. The greatest thing we can do sometimes is just to listen.

Open Place acknowledges that 'Forgotten Australians' is a term not necessarily accepted or used by all. Other names include Care Leavers, Homies, State Wards, Ex or Former Residents, and more.



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.



We are committed to providing safe, inclusive and accessible services for all people.

Cover image: Open Place 2024 Commemorative March for Forgotten Australians.

We use some stock images in this report and advise that they are for illustrative purposes only.

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Acronyms, Initialisms and Abbreviations

AFL	Australian Football League	LGBTIQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer
CLAN	Care Leavers Australasia Network	OP	Open Place
DFFH	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (Victorian Government)	Orpho	Orphanage
DHA	Department of Home Affairs (Australian Government)	Orphos	Orphans
DHS	Department of Human Services (former name for DFFH)	PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
FA	Forgotten Australian	RA	Relationships Australia
FAs	Forgotten Australians	RAV	Relationships Australia Victoria
GP	General Practitioner	TAFE	Technical and Further Education

Executive summary

This is **to be seen**.

It is a report and set of priorities that provides a roadmap for educating Victorians about the existence and needs of Forgotten Australians. Forgotten Australians are the adults who endured Australia's institutional care system as children during the 20th century, the majority of whom were neglected, abused, and abandoned.¹

Today, they are facing social isolation, psychological conditions, and physical ill health because of their childhood experiences.²

Two major inquiries into the abuse of children in institutional care in Australia have resulted in successive state and national apologies, as well as redress schemes.³

Despite this recognition, and ongoing media reporting of the historical abuses suffered by children in institutional care, it appears that most Victorians are still unfamiliar with the term 'Forgotten Australian'.⁴

Many are also unaware of the vulnerabilities and needs of those who have managed to survive.⁵ Because of this, many Forgotten Australians feel they are still being forgotten today and the apologies, that promised so much, have not delivered the recognition or support they had hoped for.⁶

Some support is provided through Open Place: a support service for Forgotten Australians that is operated by Relationships Australia Victoria (RAV).

To bridge the ongoing support and recognition gap within Victoria, Open Place has employed a Community Education Coordinator (the Coordinator).

Across 4 months in late 2024 and early 2025, the Coordinator consulted 195 Forgotten Australians through rural and regional Victoria, and in metropolitan Melbourne.

The consultations involved asking Forgotten Australians the following 3 questions.

1. What information should be in an education package about Forgotten Australians?
2. In Victoria, who needs to hear this information?
3. How would it benefit you and others if more people knew about Forgotten Australians?

The responses to these 3 questions were compelling, encompassing a wide range of views, and are detailed in this report.

From these consultations, 6 Education Priorities were identified. From the 6 Education Priorities, the Community Education Goal was derived.

The Education Priorities and Community Education Goal empower the Open Place Community Education Coordinator to develop a Community Education Strategy, to deliver education to the Victorian community on behalf of, and with, Forgotten Australians.

The Open Place Community Education Strategy is separate from this report.

The logic of our strategy is simple: If all Victorians come to understand who the Forgotten Australians are, what they endured, and the extra support they need, this will provide the impetus for services, organisations, departments and governments to create policies and programs to meet those needs.

When this happens, Forgotten Australians in Victoria will feel prouder of their identity and be able to participate in life in ways that are more equitable to the experiences of other Victorians.

This will, in turn, help to reduce the complex psychological, social, and physical health issues they presently endure, as well as ensure the mistakes of the past are remembered, not forgotten, or repeated.

Our process

Consultations



6 Education Priorities



**Community
Education Goal**



For Forgotten Australians
to be **understood**,
to be treated with **dignity** and
respect, and to be **seen**.



Community
Education Strategy



Empowered
Forgotten Australians

Consultations

Introduction to consultation

195

Forgotten Australians
consulted

14

Social Support Groups
across Victoria

8

Individual
submissions

Between 11 July and 11 November 2024, the Open Place Community Education Coordinator held consultations at 14 Open Place-facilitated Social Support Groups in rural, regional, and metropolitan locations throughout Victoria.

Social Support Groups are groups of Forgotten Australians who are registered with Open Place and gather once a month to take part in meetings and social activities, including excursions and outings.

At the beginning of each consultation, the Coordinator presented the following 3 questions for discussion.

**What information should be
in an education package
about Forgotten Australians?**

**In Victoria,
who needs to hear
this information?**

**How would it benefit you and
others if more people knew
about Forgotten Australians?**

The attending Social Support Group members were informed they could answer the questions in any way they'd like, and in any order. The questions were to be used more as a guide for conversation, than a strict method for gathering structured responses.

The purpose of these consultations was three-fold:

1. To capture information to support the development of Educational Priorities and a Community Education Goal for Open Place.
2. To provide agency for the RAV Open Place Community Education Coordinator to educate others about Forgotten Australians on behalf of, and at times, with, Forgotten Australians.
3. To provide Forgotten Australians with the opportunity to be truly heard, and for their own words to be reflected in this Report and Priorities – a process which can have therapeutic benefits.

In addition to the verbal consultations, participants of the consultations were provided with a printout of the 3 questions. They were informed that if they didn't feel comfortable talking in a group setting, they could provide written or verbal feedback after the session, or by email, via the post, or by delivering it to a staff member at the next Social Support Group gathering.

The Coordinator also provided an outline of his role in the Open Place Newsletter and invited Forgotten Australians to make individual submissions to this Report – which some took up. These individual submissions are represented in this section of the Report (below).

All participants were informed about how the information they shared during consultations would be used, and told that they could choose to opt out at any time before or during the consultation process.

How to read the consultation notes

The Consultation Notes are included in this section of the Report. As you will read, Forgotten Australians commonly feel let down by governments and the institutions in which they spent time as children.

Most services and organisations are not aware of the term 'Forgotten Australians' and have limited understanding (or training) of how to support people who are experiencing chronic Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), resulting from childhood abuse.

Such was the lack of hope amongst some Forgotten Australians, they felt that being consulted was useless and futile.

For this reason, it is vitally important that Forgotten Australians can see their words captured in this Report, and that the 6 Priorities which were developed from their words, are a true reflection of what they want for themselves, and for other Forgotten Australians.

When the consultations were conducted, notes of the conversations were recorded by hand and then typed up later.

This method was used so Forgotten Australians could see their words being captured, to help build trust in the process. We recognise that this is not a perfect process.

It is likely that a portion of what was said may have been lost, misinterpreted, or even written down incorrectly. Wherever possible, the handwritten words have been transferred exactly as they were said, or as a subsection of what was said, to represent the crux of the discussion.

Use of the consultation notes

Many Forgotten Australians are hesitant to reach out for support, or to being reached out to, by any service, group, organisation or educational institution, with whom they do not have an established relationship, or trust.

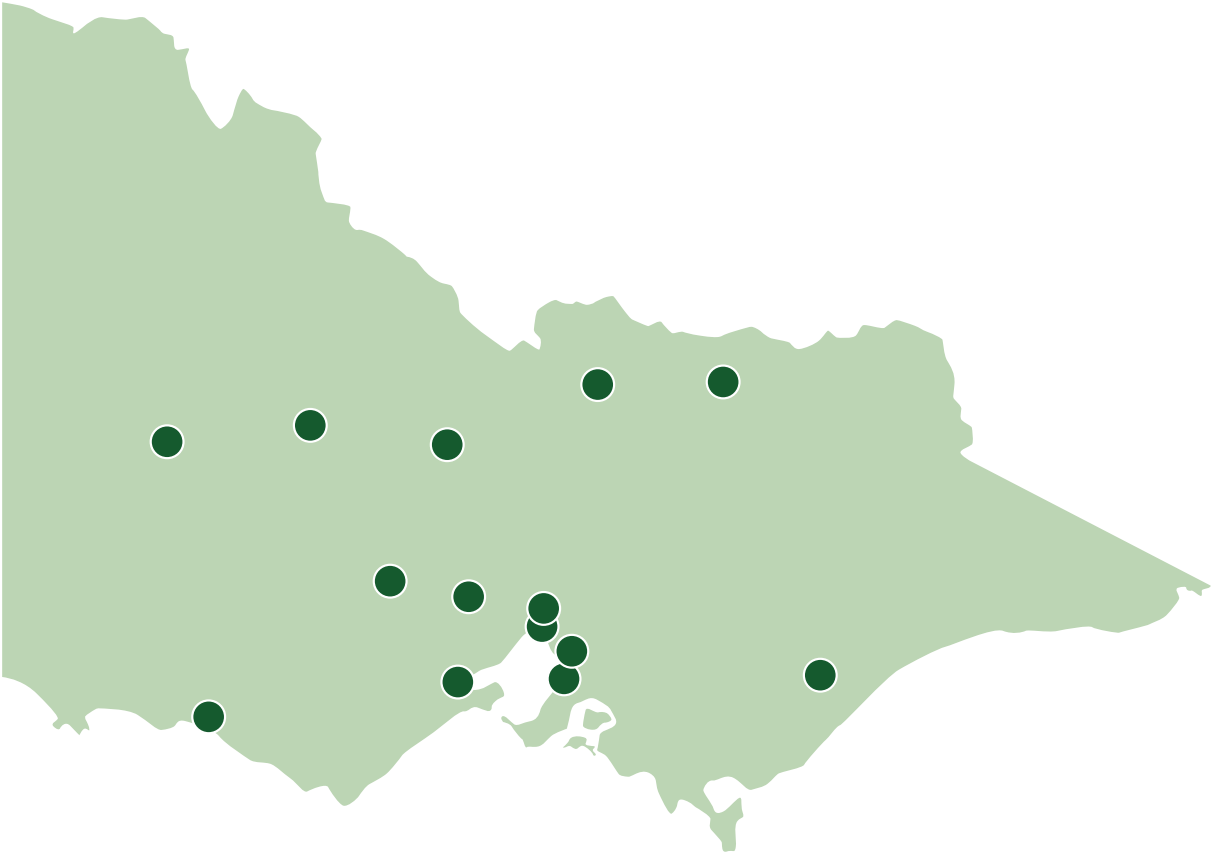
To prevent over-consultation, and re-traumatisation of Forgotten Australians; services, groups, organisations, and educational institutions are encouraged to use the data in this Report, to achieve one or more of the listed 6 Priorities.

NOTE: Some readers may find some of the views and experiences of Forgotten Australians distressing. Open Place believes that Forgotten Australians need to be able to express their opinions and be heard. To be listened to, and believed, forms part of the healing process.

Social support group consultations

Consultation attendance

Social Support Group	Date	Attendees	Male	Female
Sale	11 July 2024	18	9	9
Dandenong	31 July 2024	17	8	9
Shepparton	13 August 2024	18	8	10
Geelong	14 August 2024	13	6	7
Donald	22 August 2024	4	4	0
Warrnambool	4 September 2024	8	3	5
Frankston	6 September 2024	10	3	7
Preston	20 September 2024	8	1	7
Ballarat	8 October 2024	18	12	6
Richmond	11 October 2024	25	22	3
Bendigo	17 October 2024	14	4	10
Horsham	24 October 2024	5	2	3
Wangaratta	9 November 2024	12	5	7
Bacchus Marsh	11 November 2024	17	7	10
TOTAL		187	94	93





Verbal comments

- 'People are not aware of Forgotten Australians (FAs).'
- 'There should be a promotion or campaign (about FAs).'
- 'This service (Open Place) needs to be promoted in Tasmania. There's nothing in Tasmania for FAs. I had to come to Victoria to know that there was something for FAs.'
- 'A Forgotten Australian card is a priority.'
- 'A Special Day for Forgotten Australians. There's a day for everything else, why not FAs?'
- 'Can we have our own flag?'
- 'People need to know that Complex PTSD is different to other forms of PTSD. FAs have Complex PTSD.'
- 'Council and education are at fault because they don't cover down to the needs of the individual.'
- 'We need individual funding through a numbered card.'
- 'Medical and council services (need to be educated about Forgotten Australians).'
- 'You have to explain yourself over and over.'
- 'Child protection workers don't understand the needs of FAs.'
- 'Nothing will be achieved. It is too late. You can't do anything that will make a difference.'
- 'You should wait for the Victorian Redress. This is what is going to provide the biggest opportunity.'
- 'It is hard having to justify who and what we've been through.'
- 'Regional areas miss out on all the benefits that FAs from the city receive.'
- 'DFFH (Department of Family, Fairness and Housing) have been reluctant to consult FAs and won't come out to the regions.'
- 'It's too difficult.'
- 'There should be a card for FAs like what Veteran's receive – Gold Card. They apologise but then don't provide anything to help us.'
- 'The card that explains that you are Forgotten Australian has been good. I've laminated it and used it to explain to people who I am. (Discussion around the benefit and non-benefit of the card. Some people said they'd like one. Others said they wouldn't use it because it is just too shameful.)'
- 'Councils are the groups you need to focus on. They are the ones that can get the message out everywhere. They can provide education to their staff and community about the needs of FAs.'

'It is hard having to justify who [we are] and what we've been through.'

Dandenong Social Support Group

Verbal comments

- 'Education is required. It shouldn't be that just the Stolen Generation is recognised. Forgotten Australians need to be recognised for their suffering too. We are a different 'Generation' of Stolen people.'
- 'There should never have been a thing such as orphanages.'
- 'Forgotten Australians are unrecognised. We are still forgotten. It's not our fault. Forgotten Australian: what is that?'
- 'The Government has still not made Forgotten Australians a priority.'
- 'We are the Forgotten of the Forgiven.'
- 'Stolen Generations get everything, and we get nothing. Yet we've been through the same thing. We were with them. They were there with us.'
- 'My father was a Stolen Generation. We're all in the same basket.'
- 'The Government have apologised. They apologise and apologise, but it doesn't mean a thing. They have shortchanged us. We need help. We have health issues from what happened to us. Where is the help?'
- 'Open Place is the only place that has helped us and understood us. Nobody else! Not one.'
- 'We all have behaviours that are different to others – our behaviours come out of us from what happened. We're the ones who can't stand it when we're in a queue. We are manipulative. And if somebody gets too close to us, we do things to throw them off the scent. Do you know what I'm trying to say? We do these things because of what has happened. We have difficulty forming relationships and bringing up kids. We don't let anyone get too close to us. We push them away.'
- 'I have felt a sanctuary at Open Place.'
- 'It's a war inside. My skin may look like normal. I may look normal. And I sit here and talk like normal. But inside me, it is a war.'
- 'You go into Centrelink, and you react differently. You just – you know, let it all out. It's PTSD. It's why we react this way.'
- 'The funding for prescriptions. The cost of medical. It's a struggle to get through.'
- 'The Vic (Victorian) Government have just given an apology – but they are not helping. And there's nowhere to go when you need help. They don't mean it. They say sorry, but they're not sorry. They're just saying it.'
- 'Sorry is just a word.'
- 'I had to pay \$5,000 of my own money to go private, because I couldn't get into a public hospital. Why?'
- 'The Stolen Generation Walk around the footy oval at the AFL (Australian Football League) but not Forgotten Australians. Why not?'
- 'Why isn't there a tick box for Forgotten Australians? There are tick boxes for everyone else, but not us. We need help too!'
- 'Orange Door – they don't know who Forgotten Australians are.'



Written responses

What information should be in an Education Package about Forgotten Australians?

Most FAs have PTSD and forced adoptions.

The struggles they (FAs) face.

The absence of mothers and fathers is the most horrible thing that happens to the Forgotten Australians.

Not only Stolen Generation should be recognise(d), but Forgotten Australians should be too. We are as important and fragile individuals.

In the same way we let people know - at football games, about Aboriginal people's past, we have to let them know about the forgotten white people. Include both.

What happened to us.

Taken away from parent.

Impacts - employment - getting knocked back, not some opportunities, judged unfairly, blamed for things, not believed - you have to lie or hide things

In Victoria, who needs to hear this information?

Schools who deal with grandparents (that are FAs). Doctors. Police. Orange Door/ Safe Steps.

All government departments. (Are foster homes the answer?)

The Government needs to understand Forgotten Australians and what we went through. Such as abuse and any sort. Sorry is only a word to them. We feel they don't really comprehend and don't do any more to help us. We need like a Gold Card for example for medical or transport needs etc.

Everyone - just like with Indigenous people.

How would it benefit you and others if more people know about Forgotten Australians?

To not have to explain what an FA is.

Most people are not interested.

Help with cost of everyday life for us. If veterans can have it, why not us? Not happy Jan.

It helps everyone, we can be understood and not blamed or penalized in some way for what happened to us. People should know what happened.

'It's a war inside. My skin may look like normal. I may look normal. And I sit here and talk like normal. But inside me, it is a war.'

Shepparton Social Support Group

Verbal comments

- 'There's a lot of people who don't know Forgotten Australians – they don't know who we are. They think we are Stolen Generation.'
- 'There was a film in the late 90s on how we were brought up in the orphanage. (There needs to be more of this.)'
- 'We've got to show where we've come from. Like (the) soldiers (do). We should be able to tell our story in an info at TAFE (Technical and Further Education), Universities, Schools etc. It needs to start there. Education developed by Forgotten Australians. It needs to be therapeutic, (like how Forgotten Australians) can't sit with their back to the door.'
- 'There is a lot of trauma – we need to yell to be heard.'
- 'Give us better health outcomes – more likely to be happy to be there.'
- 'I have Aboriginal background. When I see police, I'm triggered. It's not our fault.'
- 'Different organisations need to be aware of what Forgotten Australians are about, and the impact upon them. For example, when you try to explain at the Chemist what Forgotten Australians are about, they just look at you blank. They brushed me off. We need it so that we are not constantly explaining ourselves. When you say you are a Forgotten Australian, people don't know what that means.'
- 'I'm all for the card (that explains who the Forgotten Australians are).'
- 'We need to teach the doctors, the GPs, and the specialists.'
- 'My daughter and granddaughter are showing signs of having problems. People need to know that trauma is passed on to children.'
- 'I haven't been able to open up.'
- 'My sister had to bring up her one grandchild. DHS (the Department of Human Services, now known as the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing; DFFH) tried to take them away to a foster home.'
- 'DFFH need to be better educated (about Forgotten Australians).'
- 'There's no box to tick (to identify as a Forgotten Australian).'
- 'There's a lot of media coverage about Stolen Generation, but nothing about Forgotten Australians. Nobody is educated about Forgotten Australians.'
- 'We were stolen too. We are Australians, all of us, regardless of our skin colour.'
- 'How do we get the story out?'
- 'I was put into the system because he (my father) was mentally unwell. We were never released back to him. I suffered horrific abuse. It is hard to maintain relationships. I went to university for five years and was released into the workforce. I couldn't work. I was not believed.'
- 'They need to understand the sickness of those homes (orphanages). When I applied for the paperwork, all the bad stuff was crossed out – a big black mark across it. There were eight of us and we were all separated. My father was shell-shocked from WWII (World War 2). I was at St. Bernadettes. No-one came on the weekends.'
- 'It all needs to be back on the television.'
- 'Open Place is the only place that has helped us. People need to know what services exist.'
- 'Workplaces need to know about FAs. It should be part of OHS (Occupational Health Safety).'
- 'Let's go through the doctors first. They need to know.'



Written responses

Medical staff need to hear this information.

Education from Early Years! in rural communities

More information from Open Place and maybe list the Open Place names in other states and territories.

More organisations (need to be educated). Doctors' clinics. Government departments.

Laminate (the Forgotten Australian) card.

Funding

If some of 'us' wanted to talk @ schools or Probus, nursing homes etc.

Different organisations to be made aware of (what) Forgotten Australians is about, and what impacts them. What is has been like for them.

Politicians at both federal and state, public media, tv commercials, just like the Stolen Generations have tv and media.

Through the media, like the Stolen Generations, Forgotten Australians might be heard.

**'There's a lot of people who don't
know Forgotten Australians –
they don't know who we are.
They think we are the Stolen Generation.'**



Verbal comments

- ‘Doctors need to understand (about Forgotten Australians) – they wouldn’t know.’
- ‘We’re given cards (Forgotten Australian cards), but some doctors are just not interested. They say, “I don’t know what this is.”’
- ‘Centrelink needs to know (about Forgotten Australians). Discussion and comments around poor service from Centrelink.’
- ‘There is nothing to tick [on forms] for Forgotten Australians.’
- ‘We need to educate everyone.’
- ‘There needs to be a box to tick at the Medical Centre (GPs). Doctors turn over quickly. For Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander peoples, they do (get to tick a box).’
- ‘Trauma lasts for a long time.’
- ‘Nobody wants this to happen to the next generation.’
- ‘In these institutions, there was no love. It affects our whole family (now). Even the spouses have had to put up with us as well.’
- ‘The situation of aged care – absolutely disappeared. It’s not being acted upon. I have a friend living in her car, but there are empty units.’
- ‘The places responsible for the abuse in the past are not stepping up.’
- ‘Young couples should be given counselling. They need to know what happens if your family breaks down – what happens to the children. The more people understand each other, the better it will be. They need to know the impact of what happens (to children) when a family breaks down.’
- ‘We do have love. We’ve got mateship.’
- ‘People who have been in homes still don’t know about Open Place.’
- ‘It’s very hard to open-up.’
- ‘You need to get around to the schools and educate them.’
- ‘Universities, TAFEs, and social workers (need education about Forgotten Australians).’

Written responses

What information should be in an education package about Forgotten Australians?

Our history (including white Australians were placed in homes or institutions).

In Victoria, who needs to hear this information?

The more the better. Employers, businesses etc.

How would it benefit you and others if more people knew about Forgotten Australians?

They would be better informed and understand that a lot of us suffered trauma etc. and for many it has had lifelong effects, but with ongoing support from organisations such as Open Place we can cope.

**‘There is nothing to tick [on forms]
for Forgotten Australians.’**

Donald Social Support Group (St Arnaud)



Verbal comments

- 'Respect us for who we are.'
- 'Do not judge us for being in an institution.'
- 'We are sensitive because of our experiences.'
- 'What about the children of Forgotten Australians? (They need support as well.)'
- 'More people (Forgotten Australians) should know about Open Place.'
- 'Doctors should know more about Open Place – all health services.'
- 'We shouldn't have to explain.'
- 'An emblem on a Medicare Card which would indicate that we are a Forgotten Australian.'
- 'Justice/courts/police all need to know.'
- 'We've got to think of the future of our "own."'
- 'So many parents have had their kids taken from them. It's hard to be a parent, without parents.'
- 'Forms should ask: are you a Forgotten Australian? Or a Forgotten Australian family?'
- 'Why can't there be retirement homes (for Forgotten Australians)?'
- 'When applying for public housing, one of the questions should be: Are you a Forgotten Australian? Forgotten Australians should be a priority.'
- 'Within government, a minister should have Forgotten Australians as a portfolio.'
- 'What about a Forgotten Australian support group like Alcoholics Anonymous (AA).'

'Respect us for who we are.'

Warrnambool Social Support Group

Verbal comments

- 'How do we identify new people (Forgotten Australians)?'
- 'I wasn't even aware (of Open Place) – I had no idea there was support out there.'
- 'We need a safe place (Forgotten Australians).'
- 'Students going to university, one on one deal with children and families. (They) need to be aware of what it's like to be in the (orphanage) – part of their interaction.'
- 'Don't be so formal (with us) – it puts us off.'
- 'Medical - nurses in rural areas are in contact with lots of people (Forgotten Australians). Even magistrates and solicitors.'
- 'When people find out we are Forgotten Australians, they treat us like criminals.'
- 'How are you going to deal with a person who is in a panic (attack)? – in a public space? – Forgotten Australians?'
- 'The (Forgotten Australian) card is very important. It gives us a general profile. It makes people stop and think.'
- '(There should be a) liaison position to accompany police – a worker, not police. Some(body) who knows from experience.'
- 'Set up a dialogue that's going to inform Forgotten Australians.'
- 'Some FAs don't carry the Forgotten Australian card. They feel like they're labelled.'
- 'Something (could be) linked to our licences or Centrelink Card – saying this is who we are as people.'
- 'Centrelink are harassing me and my family. They should be sensitive with people's information, not asking loud questions about your life in front of everyone.'
- 'Housing (is the same) – you're asked loud questions in front of everyone.'
- 'There needs to be books in schools about Forgotten Australians. You need to get it on the agenda. Don't judge a book by its cover.'
- 'Housing. You can't get public housing.'
- 'The apology needs to get out to make people aware.'
- 'If institutions would tell the truth, a lot of this stuff would be better.'
- 'You have PTSD and they just want to give you a pill to fix it. It doesn't fix it.'
- 'There's not enough support. Not enough awareness (about Forgotten Australians). I did not have any acknowledgement of what I've been through.'
- 'Why does there need to be an age for Forgotten Australians. Why is there a cut off? I have a cousin who went through exactly the same as me. She is born one year different, and she gets nothing.'
- 'I know of families where the parents were in care, and their children were taken away as well. I have a child in care now. And now I have a child taken off of me.'
- 'Why do Forgotten Australians not have the pins and ribbons? Needs to be better distribution. More dignity and respect.'
- 'They need to stop taking kids from Forgotten Australians. It goes from generation to generation. FA kids are being taken away.'
- 'The MyGov account should say Forgotten Australian.'
- 'We need to change the way Forgotten Australians are discriminated against. Why should we be judged for what we had no control of?'
- 'If I can be asked if I'm an LGBTIQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer) on forms – and talk about my sex life – then why can't I be asked if I'm a Forgotten Australian?'
- 'In care, there is no love.'



Received by mail

To whom it may concern, In relation to the Redress of the state government, I would like to inform you that I was institutionalised from the age of 15 months to 15 years of age, being taken away and separated from my mother and brothers. I do consider myself of the stolen generation even though I may not have an indigenous heritage; never knowing who my father was. I feel that the stolen generation category should not just apply to the indigenous population, for it would be easily argued in a court of law to be based on race and therefore illegal. I hope that you will take this important issue into consideration. Thanking you in anticipation.

**‘When people find out we are Forgotten
Australians, they treat us like criminals.’**



Verbal comments

- 'When people say Forgotten Australians, they think Stolen Generation. People don't realise that Forgotten Australians are not Aboriginal.'
- 'There is NAIDOC Week (National Aboriginal and Islanders Day Observance Committee Week); why is there not a week for Forgotten Australians?'
- 'When I say to doctors and counsellors, they don't even know who Forgotten Australians are – that will be good, great if they know.'
- '(At) hospitals, if Forgotten Australians come up, they'll say, "What are you talking about?"'
- 'People don't want to know (about us). They don't believe that these things happened.'
- 'Government needs to be made more open and accountable. They need to stand up.'
- 'They (the Government) need to be made more aware, and when they're doing the speeches, they need to know what they're talking about.'
- 'The sad part of it is, the younger generation growing up (politicians), are just as naïve. They don't know what we're talking about. They say they are sorry, but they don't know what they're saying sorry for.'
- 'Sorry is just a five-letter word.'
- 'Sorry means nothing without action.'
- 'Is there a person in government that can speak on behalf of Forgotten Australians – we need somebody speaking on our behalf. We need a Forgotten Australian Commission – or something like that to fight on our behalf and educate. Instead of an apology, speaking on our behalf.'
- 'When you fill out forms, they ask if you are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander – we need equal recognition. They say the babes (Aboriginal) being taken away, but we were also taken. It should be our right.'
- 'I remember the Aboriginals they placed with families. It (Forgotten Australians) should be able to sit alongside.'
- 'My best mate was Aboriginal in the home. The Redress Scheme doesn't care whether it's black or white. The amount started at \$250,000, then \$150,000, and the average is \$80,000. I tell people to get to a lawyer – no win, no fee. Some get offered \$2,000,000 - \$4,000,000 - and some get \$40,000. Everyone should get the same amount.'
- 'It's not the money, it's the hurt that everybody's been through. It's dirty money. Even if you've been bashed, it cuts both ways. Everyone's paid differently for different things.'
- 'We have to fight for places like Open Place – like Open Place counselling.'
- 'It's hard to trust people. Some don't have the ability to learn – we need the tools.'
- 'We haven't been taught to associate openly in the public.'
- 'It just doesn't affect us; it affects families.'
- 'Programs on TV mention everybody else, but they don't mention the Forgotten Australians.'

'Sorry means nothing without action.'



Verbal comments

- ‘(Focus education on) councils - people are getting on in age and they need certain services. There should be extra services to keeping people in their own homes.’
- ‘What about non-Forgotten Australians? How can we get services if we’re not a senior?’
- ‘We need help with independence, maintenance and extra security. All of us (Forgotten Australians) have not received enough support.’
- ‘Mental support would be good. It’s taken most of my life to get out of the house without depending upon someone.’
- ‘My one day a month with the SSG (Social Support Group), it’s the first time I’ve been welcome any time in my life.’
- ‘They (government) should start keeping (providing) money to those that are here, rather than just refugees and asylum seekers.’
- ‘The following points were provided by one Forgotten Australian:
 - ‘You need to get information out about how people (FAs) were pushed out into the world at 15 years of age.’
 - ‘It wasn’t our fault we didn’t have good parents.’
 - ‘When we were transported from one home to another, it was in the back of a divvy (police divisional) van. How was anybody to know where we had been taken?’
 - ‘I wonder if we were better off in our own home, rather than being put in one of those homes.’
 - ‘Mental health issues and illiteracy is an issue (for Forgotten Australians). We weren’t given the education and support.’
 - ‘We need to get the information out there.’
- ‘Three people in my class have committed suicide. You think that priests and nuns are holy people, they are not.’
- ‘If I hadn’t seen the apology (on TV), I wouldn’t have known to get help. Nobody would have known. Why is it not advertised? When it comes to voting, there’s billions of dollars in funds. Why is some of that money not used to advertise about us (FAs)?’
- ‘Open Place sounds like a place for homeless people. The name doesn’t represent us. It should be called something like, Children Who Were Placed in Institutions.’
- ‘Do you think 6 months in a home is enough (amount of time spent in care before being eligible for Redress)? The government already knows how long we’ve been in a home. Why does the government not get in touch with people (FAs) who’ve been in an institution for more than 6 months and let them know what they are eligible for?’
- ‘The recognition is not there for what we went through.’

Written response from one member

Who in Victoria needs to hear information about Forgotten Australians?

Primary school grades 5 and 6; high schools; Centrelink; DHS (DFFH); TAFE; universities (Australia-wide); all service providers; welfare services; community centres; hospitals; mental health services; drug and alcohol rehabilitation services; doctors; solicitors; prisons; police; foster homes, local councils; aged care services; nursing homes. Like Centrelink Card. There needs to be a legal (Forgotten Australian) Card with name, photo and address, like a Centrelink Card. All forms that come from government agencies. All education centres. Mental health centres. Change name for Forgotten Australians to Australians in Care.

‘The recognition is not there for what we went through.’



Verbal comments

- 'I'm frustrated with health organisations that find out I get funding from Open Place and then they take it to the limit – they take all my funding. I opened an account with a dentist in Balaclava and as soon as they knew I had funding, they took everything. There needs to be more respect for Forgotten Australians who get funding.'
- 'I went to a medical centre in Daylesford. I told them I grew up in an 'orphan'. I'm white. I was the youngest of 7. They know about Aboriginal kids, but not Australian. Right across the medical field, you have to explain – and they put their hand up to their mouths. They are stunned that white kids were stolen.'
- 'I had a snapped my fibula and went to Hospital in Ballarat. You've definitely snapped that, he said. He said, "You're Aboriginal, aren't you? You're on welfare, right? This is too expensive for the government to fix." He sent me away without it being fixed.'
- 'When you're Aboriginal, they do treat you differently.'
- 'With housing, I've had convos regarding PTSD. I've told them I can't be in a violent area with aggressive people. But I got put in a house with violent people around me. Consideration needs to be given where to house Forgotten Australians.'
- 'Aged care – there's a lack of understanding. We don't want to be institutionalised. They (aged care services) need a re-education.'
- 'Terrible to deal with – housing. They've pushed back.'
- 'In hospital, when you tell them you're a Forgotten Australian they say, what is that supposed to mean?'
- 'Centrelink needs to be educated (about Forgotten Australians).'
- 'Once an organisation finds out you get funding, you don't get any service. I had a psychologist who nearly went to sleep (during the consultation). Some do the right thing. Some do the wrong thing.'
- 'You need to permission to touch a Forgotten Australian.'

'Aged care – there's a lack of understanding. We don't want to be institutionalised. They (aged care services) need a re-education.'

Open Place Drop-In, Richmond



Verbal comments

- 'I have a fear of bringing things up and looking at things. I get nightmares if I do.'
 - 'Educate these people. They need to know.'
 - 'They just think, "I'm glad that didn't happen to me." They can't understand how other people feel. They could never understand how we feel.'
 - 'Does Open Place have a home? Some place where there are spaces for Forgotten Australians to go? Somewhere, if something happens, we know where we can go - for example, any person who has come out of an institution. (It could be) run by Open Place. There could be professional people there. (A passionate discussion then ensued within the group about a short-term accommodation facility where Forgotten Australians could check themselves in when they are facing a crisis).'
 - 'Whenever I'm out in the world, in hospital, (my behaviour) is misinterpreted. It would be handy if people could understand. They don't have to feel pity or sympathy, just understand.'
 - 'People don't have to feel pity or sympathy, they just need to understand and treat all people equally.'
 - 'I feel happy when people know about Forgotten Australians. For people to be aware that nervousness doesn't mean you are guilty. If police talk to you, they think you've done something because of how you behave, but it's just nervousness from the trauma.'
 - 'You'll find a lot of people have backgrounds like us.'
 - 'Open Place has done a hell-of-a-lot for Forgotten Australians.'
 - 'You shouldn't have to carry a criminal record (from childhood) through to adulthood.'
 - 'Community health services – when people do have problems, or homeless, they can be contacted, and you get support. A good meal every week.'
 - 'Invite people to have a conversation with Forgotten Australians.'
 - 'La Trobe Uni, Behavioural Science, the students would benefit greatly from knowing about Forgotten Australians.'
 - 'By receiving counselling, this will help people overcome their desire not to get support. At the moment, we only have two counsellors (at Open Place). In the future, we need more.'
 - 'It should be taught at the Police Academy, so that education provides correct thinking (about Forgotten Australians). Many issues occur through misunderstanding.'
 - 'I was in a meeting full of counsellors. I was personally asked what could they do to understand us. The solution: Go back and put yourself in the same situation, so that you can really understand. Locked away. No nourishment. No contact with families.'
 - 'Put on a play. Go back behind the brick wall.'
 - 'Need to go with education. There's nothing on the TV or the internet. There's nothing useful you can watch.'
 - 'A museum (about Forgotten Australians). A travelling museum. Is it still running?'
 - 'School curriculum – Australian History. More shame. It's a story that's been covered up because of national shame.'
 - 'Being ashamed of what happened to me as a child. In my 30s and 40s, I just locked myself away.'
 - 'It was not until 36 that I got help.'
 - 'Centrelink need to recognise us when they're dealing with us. They hound you.'
 - 'Education. Education. Education.'
 - 'If I had an issue, I'd like a group discussion.'
-
- 'Whenever I'm out in the world, in hospital (my behaviour) is misinterpreted. It would be handy if people could understand.'**
-

Bendigo Social Support Group

Verbal comments

- 'People need to know more about Open Place and who are the Forgotten Australians.'
- 'It is getting more difficult to get appointments, and more expensive for health and specialists. We are all getting older and have lots of health-related issues due to our past.'
- 'Doctors don't have the knowledge and background to understand Forgotten Australians. We tell them we are Forgotten Australians, and it doesn't mean anything. It is not important to them.'
- 'Doctors attitude is that the FA needs a psychiatrist or psychologist, but we need to be handled with care.'
- 'We are Academy Award winning actors. On the outside we are friendly and outgoing, but inside we are crumbly marshmallow.'
- 'We need consistency across all services.'
- 'We need a Forgotten Australian 'tick box.' It is embarrassing to have to tell people about our past.'
- 'There was the sorry gathering with Jacinta Allen. But what has come out of it? Nothing.'
- 'The general community needs to be aware of who are Forgotten Australians.'
- 'I've experienced trauma and racism. I'm Aboriginal and have represented my state in sport. I've been diagnosed with extreme depression.'
- 'Advertising on television is something that works well. If it's on TV, like the Stolen Generation, people take notice.'
- 'Schools should teach it - Australian history. It's part of the history.'
- 'Not everybody will be that interested if it is on TV. We need to have a booklet instead, to give to the organisations. It would be nice to see a booklet.'
- 'We need a strategy to get these pamphlets out. So that there's knowledge about us.'
- 'Have you heard of Probus? I gave a presentation at Probus about my history, and they were all so shocked. They said, wow, we had no idea it was like that.'
- 'All health care workers need to be educated: hospitals, doctors, nurses. Even in retirement villages.'

'All health care workers need to be educated: hospitals, doctors, nurses. Even in retirement villages.'



Written responses

What information should be in an Education package about Forgotten Australians?

That we have been traumatised, damaged, and to handle with care.

There's not much about FAs. My Dr has knowledge about me, and I think more GPs need to be aware of what we went through. Counselling was no benefit to me as it set me off with epilepsy. I'm now on Kepra which is a good drug and when I went to St Vincents hospital the GP said I would never have a seizure again becoz (because) Parramatta Girls set me off, which gets me back and I couldn't deal with it. I hate being classified as epileptic just does my head in. And to top it off I live as I walk through Hell's Doors. For the rest of my life. But I have art and that's a positive for me.

Forgotten Australians are not Care Leavers. We did not live in a caring environment; we were certainly forgotten. Trauma cannot be shed, nor explained. We were, are, and always will be vulnerable however we are strong at the same time. Our past stays with us, but it does not define us. (An education package should include) Open Place, and what it is, and what it provides. Health funding – what it's for and its limitations. How to access services that are available to us.

That we exist.

Our difficult trauma behaviours impact our access to health or community services. It's easy for us to be put into the "too hard" basket and forget us. We are disconnected from family, and we can't get this back.

In Victoria, who needs to hear this information?

Everybody.

Centrelink, health services, GPs, aged care services, dental services, police, magistrates' courts and magistrates. All forms should have a tick box for us, but it needs to be something that results in a true outcome, not just an identifying mark.

Centrelink telephone numbers that can help us. Local governments.

Doctors, health system, housing, Centrelink, child protection.

How would it benefit you and others if more people knew about Forgotten Australians?

Help us relax in the community better with more awareness.

It is difficult, embarrassing and humiliating and sometimes shameful to tell people – if they knew about FAs it would spare us this humility.

Too hard basket. Hospitals etc. Better understanding.

Practical ways to engage FAs and support them without embarrassing or shaming them.



Verbal comments

- 'Something from Open Place that shows what we're entitled to. It needs to be a proper registered card, with a number – but government approved.'
- 'Something you can tap.'
- 'Getting one-on-one support to get a job. People who have grown up in homes are frowned upon and treated differently. They are treated not equal. They forget that we were kids, and it wasn't our fault.'
- 'We were sad and unloved, and we need to be shown understanding. We weren't given love and hugs and kisses – we had nothing. So, people need to understand. And for those who've been sexually abused, it's a whole new extra thing.'
- 'If Forgotten Australians could get help with food – funding for us. We struggle more than others.'
- 'You need to focus on education in TAFE/ university. Certificate IV in Community Services.'
- 'Anyone in customer service (should know about Forgotten Australians).'
- 'Police need to be informed about who are the Forgotten Australians, and how to work with people who are Forgotten Australians. We can't be put into confined spaces.'
- 'The law needs to change for people who've been in a home.'
- 'We need to be treated with respect. Respect goes both ways.'
- 'Instead of juvenile (detention), put them into bootcamp. Teach them how to get a job, and respect. I did time in the Army. I turned out better.'

'We were sad and unloved, and we need to be shown understanding. We weren't given love and hugs and kisses – we had nothing.'



Verbal comments

- 'A lot of people in orphanages didn't get the education – or social skills. Some can hardly write and are unable to properly support themselves.'
- 'Due to the lack of education and opportunities, our life would have been a lot better. We've never reached our full potential.'
- 'It's like we never had a right to have anything better.'
- 'If counselling was provided earlier (during care and after care), our lives would be better.'
- 'The importance of young children knowing that they are good, rather than being told that they are not, and have no worth.'
- 'It (support for Forgotten Australians) needs to be advertised. I didn't know anything about Forgotten Australians. My sister-in-law told me about it.'
- 'When I got my file, there were so many lies. We both got very upset over what was said.'
- 'The Aboriginal children were taken, but we white children were also taken – and they treated (us) the same way. They're helping the Aboriginals (now), and they get support, and it's good – really good – but there were white people too.'
- 'We were treated the same as the Aboriginals, but we are not recognised.'
- 'Your home is your home, no matter your ethnicity, and we were taken too, without explanation. We have fear and lack of confidence. It doesn't matter where or who you are when you're a child, it's the same pain. We know about the Stolen Generation, but Forgotten Australian's need the same recognition.'
- 'Institutions should still be here today. They'd know better how to do it, because the system has learnt, and counselling would be provided. It would be run a lot better.'
- 'I found my mother after 58 years. But she had died and I couldn't speak to her.'
- 'Institutions, doctors and other organisations need to tell the truth.'
- 'Liz (Open Place) has been a Godsend to me. She calls me once a month. If Open Place had a few more counsellors... I had a counsellor at (a health service in Wangaratta) and she couldn't help me. She referred me an institutional place (Open Place). Liz has been for me a Godsend.'
- 'Counsellors need to know the lived experience.'
- 'My (friend/relative) was put into a psych ward and locked in a room. I said to them, "If you knew Forgotten Australians, you would never have thrown her into that dark room." They did exactly the wrong thing.'
- 'What happened, it wasn't okay.'
- 'You need people to believe you. Now they have the SOCIT team (Victoria Police Sexual Offences Child Abuse Investigation Team) it's different. I had a beautiful woman police officer, and she helped me.'
- 'Everyone has a slogan. We don't have a slogan – we need one.'
- 'Every time something is offered by the government, it fails, and they are not following through. And then you're worse off.'

'I found my mother after 58 years. But she had died and I couldn't speak to her.'

Bacchus Marsh Social Support Group

Verbal comments

- 'We are not Forgotten Australians. We are (the) Forgotten Generation. (The problems all started) when the lawyers stood in.'
- 'We're Lost Australians. Nobody wants to 'acknowledge us.'
- 'I think a lot of the schools all over the country should have a Forgotten Australian (come in) to explain what it is like to not have an education, to be ashamed, ignorant – they call you this when you don't have an education.'
- 'Things were not as easy as they have it today – ashamed of not having the big words, when we are talking to lawyers. They don't talk with you; they talk above you.'
- 'You miss out on a lot of things in life. You can't read magazines; you can't understand what the government is trying to tell you – and even Open Place.'
- 'Doctors need to be in that. Receptionists. Lawyers. Even the police don't understand the people that are going through it.'
- 'Should be educating our government. This is where it all starts. They haven't learnt, they're still denying it today. Start with the hierarchy, because they think they're better than us.'
- 'FAs need to meet directly and speak with management. I think that chap was right; we should have a vision.'
- 'Half the people who are Forgotten Australians don't know they're a Forgotten Australian. Should be able to talk about that more. They talk about the Aboriginal.'
- 'It needs to be on TV, interviews, like A Current Affair. People look at A Current Affair – a lot.'
- 'Lifeline. 90% don't know what a Forgotten Australian is.'
- 'Who funds all this? What happens if the government pulls all the funding?? It's all good to say what you're doing; government says they're broke. It will be a disaster if that happens.'
- 'Open Place Newsletters. Is it possible to get a phone app, and it is read to you, and then you'll never miss out.'



- 'The Indigenous included their family, and I don't ever remember my child being included (as a Forgotten Australian). I have 6 chronic illnesses, and we're dying from this. I had 2 sisters that died early. I'm saying 2 things here. I had RA say to my daughter, I'm so sorry your mother is a Forgotten Australian.'
- 'My grandchild says, Grandma, what were you like with your homework? I was never given the chance (to learn)! Even the grandchildren are affected. There's a lot of shame we have to face every day.'
- 'I went to an Aboriginal community the other day. My heart broke. They've got everything. What do we get?'
- 'There are some people (Open Place) who have done really well, to get us to the place we are today. We need to acknowledge those that are helping us.'
- 'I was hoping you might be able to get some important people to assist, like actors, musicians, writers, painters. We may be able to get some of these people who may be able to get out what we're on about. We're going around in circles – CLAN (Care Leavers Australasia Network) and Open Place. Get some others to come in (and help), rather than be discouraged.'
- 'You could get reps from each of the groups (Social Support Groups) to help.'
- 'You can't help your kids with their homework, so you make excuses. People need to understand what it was like for us. That people suffered. That people know we suffered.'
- 'Who do we have in government? Who is looking after this sort of thing?'
- 'You need a documentary that shows the entire history of Forgotten Australians – the Australian story.'
- 'I think it's education. It needs to start with education. Forgotten Australians don't declare how they were brought up. I was brought up in an orphanage.'

'People need to understand what it was like for us. That people suffered. That people know we suffered.'



Individual consultations and written submissions

Participants

Name	Method	Date
Teresa	Email	11 December 2024
Doug	Email	11 December 2024
Barry	Email	14 October 2024
James	Handout	11 October 2024
Deb	Phone	3 October 2024
Jennifer	Handout	1 October 2024
Michelle	Phone	30 September 2024
Kath	Phone	30 September 2024

Submission by Teresa (Email)



Teresa

To Community Education Coordinator



Hello Richard,

My name is Teresa. I am one of the younger generations of Forgotten Australians (FA), in my late fifties.

I was at the apology to Forgotten Australians on the 16th November, 2009. After heading home from there I remember a conversation with a taxi driver as I was talking about the apology I had just been to. He said to me something along the lines of are you the Stolen Generation. We'd just had a national apology and yet he didn't realise who it was for.

My answer to who needs to know more about Forgotten Australians? All Australians.

I don't think Australians are any much more aware of who a FA is since 2009 than they are now. People either mention the Stolen Generation when I say I am a Forgotten Australian or they mistake me for a Lost Innocent (Child Migrant). From my experience, business, health, government, community and education services, housing services, nursing homes and charities (that offer food and housing assistance) have not heard of a FA. I would also add counsellors in health settings and some other settings.

I can only recall one person who knew who a Forgotten Australian is and that was a nice Irish man who helped me with a NILS (No Interest Loan Scheme) loan application.

What do people need to know? That Forgotten Australians are a separate group to the Stolen Generation and Lost Innocents and that Forgotten Australians lived in some of the same places of abuse and neglect and endured abuse and neglect too. Also, the impacts this had, the trauma and medical conditions it has caused, which has had lifelong effects.

They need to know this so that they can show understanding because what people say can further traumatise a Forgotten Australian.

Forgotten Australians are a part of Australian history, past and present. Even though it is not a nice part of history it should be taught in schools as are other parts of not so nice Australian history.

Example of how we are not known despite the apology:

At a hospital appointment:

I was at a hospital appointment using Open Place funding to pay the \$400 for a non-eligible Medicare rebateable MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) (I had serious illness). The staff did not understand what the funding was for and after I went to the waiting room I could hear one staff member say some flippant remark about who knows what it's for (about the funding). She clearly had no understanding of the impact of hearing her attitude and she clearly did not understand who a FA is.

Past Disability Job Network manager:

At my first meeting with him I showed him my Forgotten Australian card which says FAs suffered trauma and 'believe me' (from Alliance for Forgotten Australians to help educate people).

He dismissively said to me, 'so were you born in England' and changed the subject. He made it quite clear he was not interested.

I am no longer in the above situation. However, I still find people do not know what I am talking about when I am using health brokerage funding and I try to explain to the place I go to book an appointment.

The changes I am hoping will occur from people knowing who we are:

To educate them to listen and not treat us in the above manner and know that our neglect and trauma is real.

To also know that we have not grown up with a family network or a supportive one. I think that is very important for the aged care sector to know as even the younger Forgotten Australians are nearing senior years. It would be good to offer Forgotten Australians a person to be a friend visitor in older years, in a nursing home or in their own home as one of a priority group. Not every Forgotten Australian is comfortable in group setting activities.

Also, at the national apology in 2009 the government (in referencing the age of FAs), excluded the younger Forgotten Australians (then in their 40s, and perhaps even 30s) in the address to the nation. Someone in the audience yelled out, 'and those in their 40s.' What disappointed me was that even older FAs said he was rude for yelling that out. I myself have been dismissed by older FAs, though I was in orphanages and have experienced various forms of abuse and neglect.

In your education package I hope you will include education as to all the age groups and generations and the final generation that FAs may have overlapped into. At the national apology I also met a man, then in his 30s who suffered abuse pre 1990 in foster care. He told me he didn't feel recognised as being a FA due to his age and abuse in the foster care setting (instead of orphanage). He was still a FA and still a victim of that timeframe of a FA.

Also, I suggest a question (optional) on medical forms, education places etc, that ask are we a Forgotten Australian. That would help to say we are recognised too and might get people looking into who we are.

I hope what I've said helps you with the education package. Open Place is the only support service of the two available in Victoria that I have chosen to be registered with.

Submission by Barry (Email)



Barry

To Community Education Coordinator



I believe that Relationships Australia could be of great assistance (to Forgotten Australians) and (could) no doubt work with places like the Salvation Army. Having an aged care home would be ideal for Forgotten Australians which could possibly be set up through RAV.

"Forgotten Orphan Australians" is (the name) that I like. For the name Forgotten Australians, people think you're indigenous. (The term) Care Leavers does not sit well with many Forgotten Australians. Where was the so called "CARE"? We had to learn how to survive the brutality.

It (the orphanage) was a cloistered world where vulnerable children were deprived of a normal upbringing. The physical and sexual violence was to the extreme, leaving children frightened and helpless with no one to turn to for protection.

Difficulty making friendships and relationships with other people as you had no trust in anyone. Left ashamed and embarrassed emotionally disturbed with many orphans finding life too challenging and taking the wrong path just trying to survive.

Assistance with public housing should have been (and still should be) a priority and provided, as well as secure employment and healthcare.

Children (should) receive adequate support from their local community, such as welfare checks.

When a Forgotten Australian leaves this world, (they need to be) assist(ed), leaving them with some dignity. Funeral arrangements and so on which many of us would not be able to afford. Having such little education, average living standards and low paid salaries.

What is more important; caring and supporting orphans who the government abandoned? Or refugees and migrants who illegally entering the country? I do agree, all should receive support, but of course orphans who were neglected and Australian Citizens should have priority.

What should be in an education about Forgotten Australians?

what and who are Forgotten Australians

what was the reason why they became an orphan

where was the love and support for orphans

who was responsible for the welfare of orphans

who are Christian Brothers

why were siblings separated from each other

did they receive an education

did they receive healthcare assistance

what happened when they reach 18 years of age

what support did orphans receive when they left the orphanage

how did they find employment and housing

physical, sexual and emotional abuse
how did they survive life outside institutions
why marriage breakdown
why families are broken

In Victoria, who needs to hear this information?

doctors
police
the workplace which is not easy
ambulance
real Estate
Centrelink
schools

How would it benefit you and others if more people know about Forgotten Australians?

it would benefit all forgotten Australians understanding when I was looking for employment
doctors can be more understanding and sympathetic
police can be more lenient after knowing my past
courts can be more lenient when it comes to crimes
knowing you have someone else who cares

Additional Comments

People with criminal records and others who have struggled:

Looking at the big picture of Forgotten Australians; brought up in various institutions around Melbourne and regional Victoria.

We all have our own stories with some Forgotten Australians still not able to talk about the atrocities that happened throughout their lives.

A small percentage of children from the State Ward, left unscathed and able to move on with their lives. Many like myself we're not so fortunate.

Being a Ward of The State for over 14 years; I believe many of us (experience) timorousness when moving away from one life to another.

Challenging times for children who had no path or direction for the future.

I know of some orphans who have been successful, some with marriage breakdowns and many others finding life difficult to live. Many surviving the trauma to ease the pain by going down the path of drugs and alcoholism. Some never found solace, finding the trauma too hard and found other ways to end the pain.

Submission by James (Written)

I'm in my 50s and I'll live to 100 I need have a Childhood HAPPY. I was abandoned in apartment in St. Kilda. I was 3 years old and 2 baby sisters. We MADE newspapers. I was emotionally, physically sexually abused at ... Boys Home. I don't like talking about it. I was a child RUNAWAY why? I am still JUST SURVIVING today. My life is FUCKD UP. A place where we belong – 100% (in reference to a discussion from an earlier consultation about Forgotten Australians having their own place). Our Forgotten Children of tomorrow. I did want to speak more, but it wasn't about me – About US Forgotten Australians. 100% others. We all opened up. I did walk away happy. Happy tears 2 (still referring to earlier discussion). I do have favourite (Open Place) staff members – EVERYBODY. Make my day. I may feel SHIT not at Open Place.

My name is James I am a proud Forgotten Australian cus (sic) I'm a survivor. Open Place may change its name it's always Open Place to me. It's not about me but other Forgotten Australians. Now need a place (that's) HOME and SAFE. Enjoy life. OPEN PLACE always felt HOMELY to me but I love to go there every day. I've always felt this PLACE 4 ME. I've been coming to Richmond more than 10 yrs. Everybody is smiling and crying HAPPY TEARS. THEY R (sic) MY FAMILY.

100% agree (about) A Place (to) call HOME. A short-term accommodation for Unforgotten Australians to live there (sic) life. I am Forgotten Australian. I've been coming here at Richmond Open Place more than 10 years. I wanted to speak more OPENLY. Something in my childhood tears me apart deep inside me. I HATE GETTING UPSET. Boys Home ruin me and OTHERS. I need (to) find myself. Some day I will.

Our Forgotten Australian(s) of tomorrow. A house of welcoming. I do believe we do this. It's not about me but us.

Submission by Deb (Verbal)

'I have a friend – a Forgotten Australian – I've grown up with this person, and I'm appalled in the health system; how we're treated. My friend suffered PTSD. She had a panic attack after hours and there's no support. This is when you're at your lowest (after hours). She rang up Lifeline, she lives alone and just wants to talk to someone. After five minutes or so, she gets a knock on the door and it's the ambulance. They react too soon! Up here we don't have any hospitals that treat PTSD – she woke up in Bendigo (an hour and a half away). Nurse said to her, "You can go now." How am I going to get home? She asks. They gave her a Myki (Public Transport Victoria payment system) Card. She was in her pyjamas! She waved somebody down and they took her to the bus. The bus driver says, we don't take Myki cards, you'll have to catch the train. She went in and begged for money. That's no way to treat anyone. She's getting to the stage where she just doesn't trust anyone. The hospital system is really poor (in regional areas) and you're sent to a hospital you don't even know.

'I'm afraid of hospitals. I always (put) Forgotten Australians at the top (of the form). I write that I must be medicated as soon as I walk in the door, or first off the rank. Nurses are not reading the form, and I abscond. If I'm not medicated when I walk in, and I think it's important for hospitals to understand FAs, and they're not following through with all that.

'It's the same with the dentist, they have to take me to another room, otherwise the anxiety takes over. Dentists are usually good, but hospitals are not very good.

'Doctors' (surgeries) need pamphlets and that sort of thing, so they understand. It should be a requirement for doctors to be trained up (about Forgotten Australians).

'There are no pamphlets (about Forgotten Australians) up here (rural Victoria).

'Redress – not happy. It's a slap in the face. Forgotten Australians should have been given their own pensions. You shouldn't have to go to a clinic and explain who you are (a Forgotten Australian). We grew up neglected by the state, but today we're still being treated the same. If we got a pension instead of redress (there would be so many less issues). Some who've got it (money from Redress) have blown it in months. Government is just pushing out whatever money there is. With DVA (Department of Veteran Affairs) there is dignity and respect, but for FAs, it's shame all over again.

'Open Place do a great job; they have all these things in place to help us with our things – they do a wonderful job – but it feels degrading to have to ask for things. We need to be taught to stand on our own two feet. We had everything done for us (in the orphanage), we had no control as kids, we can't ask now, it's so degrading. We need a better health system that allows us to stand up and overcome. It feels degrading to beg and ask for help. I don't rely on Open Place, but there may come a time where I (might) have to do it. There's no way in heaven I'm going to die in an institution (aged care) – I won't! We need support to live in our own home.

'Centrelink show no respect towards us either. You used to see a face. Now, everything is over the phone. They send an SMS to say you're having your Centrelink (payment) chopped. They put us (FAs) in the same basket as everyone else. It's unfair. We were not educated, so how are we going to find a job?'

Submission by Deb (Written)



Deb

To Community Education Coordinator



As Wards of State as kids we were thrown out at 15/16 (years old) in a lot of cases (it was) the only home we knew, and we were never able to return. The state dumped their responsibility.

As a Mum myself I could never had kicked my children out of home at 16, (they weren't ready at that age), today if they ever fall into hardship they could come back home.

For FAs that's why Open Place is so vital - social groups gives that feeling of belonging sharing meals catch ups without feeling judged to who we are.

I hope one day in the future there will be changes to what we really need.

Submission by Jenny (Email - A scan)



Jenny

To Community Education Coordinator



What information should be in an education package about Forgotten Australians?

(Include) Stolen Generations – life's history?

In Victoria, who needs to hear this information?

Mental Health, doctors, social workers

How would it benefit you and others if more people know about Forgotten Australians?

To understand more as I was in a home in Adelaide from age 1 year to 18 years.

Additional Notes

What is the difference between Forgotten Australians and Stolen Generation? It is a very sensitive topic which needs to be handled with care.

Mental health workers need to know about this issue (that) Forgotten Australians (need to be) handled with great care.

I am from South Australia and what am I allowed to have (entitled to) about Redress.

Need more pain management care.

Some people don't know what a Forgotten Australian is. Need more respect for these people: about mental health, emotional cruelty – to know about Forgotten Australians, because they are left neglect(ed), physical(ly), emotional(ly) and sexual(ly) abused; denial of basic human rights.

Life's history (needs) to be put in the package. Where to get help. I have been left emotional, mentally disturbed for years. I have a lot of times not coping. So Forgotten Australians need a lot of understand(ing) from people. Some people don't understand – even families don't.

Information kits should be sent to some mental health workers. Also, police. More people need to know. Need more understanding about Forgotten Australians.

Community centres (need) help.

Local papers (need to know) about this issue.

Submission by Michelle (Verbal)

'For 2 to 3 years now I've been getting help from Open Place

'I have never suffered depression. I've always run away from conflict.

'I've lived on the street, but I never took drugs.

'My mum was a beautiful parent. I've always felt protected by the police and government.

'I live/d next door to a motel. People were coming and going. There were some very loud and aggressive people, but when I called the police and told them what was happening, they believed me.

'The Forgotten Australian Card for me is just perfect. The judge, the police, everyone treats me different because of the card. You don't want sympathy; you just want people to know (that you're a Forgotten Australian)

'With (intervention) orders, it's easy take an order out on somebody. I find it horrible. The law drags on and on. It doesn't go by how you feel, it goes by the law.

'I want to get my licence, but I'm scared of cars. I will go in cars with certain people, but I can't handle small rooms. I can't breathe.

'I can read excellent. My spelling is horrible. I've learned by people shaming me. I'm having trouble reading. I can't do it online. I need help, but there's nobody to help.

'I don't know about insurance. Licences. Nothing. There's nobody to help.'

Submission by Kath (Verbal)

'Departments or commercial organisations that have authority over people act in a way that sometimes makes me feel like I can't breathe, and I'm out of breath like I'm going to have an asthma attack.

'My interpretation and their interpretation (of what is happening) is very different. Do you know what I mean?

'I feel that a lot of places have power over me, and then I think, "You can have it, mate!" I will walk away (and not go back). The banks, for instance, they can have authority over me, I lose my mind.'

Submission by Doug (Written)



Doug

To Community Education Coordinator



To continually say sorry only covers their guilt, apologising and throwing us scraps left over from their negligence and ignorance is nothing more than abuse of the most vulnerable again.

My words to their sorry. We become what our life experiences make us; the government and church negligence and ignorance has made us meaningless humans; to again be abused by the system of welfare and justice.

We were deprived of the opportunity to consolidate and explore our existence due to the fact of their negligence and ignorance. I cannot be rescued by saying sorry!

After you entered a government institution you became forgotten forever.

The Royal Commission was an empty enquiry into sexual abuse in institutions, nobody enquired about the physiological, physical and emotional abuse.

Don't tell me you're sorry until you know what you're sorry for and who you're sorry for.

We are the product of government ignorance.

Sorry only helps the perpetrators feel better and free of responsibility. Devoured by the wolves of power, even to the end they feed off us.

Our human civilisation is slowly becoming depleted of intelligence and common sense. We must progress into the here and now before it's too late.

We are alone in our traumatic abuse.



‘Sorry’ by Deborah Findlay

Mixed media on canvas. Gifted to Open Place in 2018.

‘This canvas was created for Forgotten Australians from a Forgotten Australian. I needed to create something special because of our long journey together we got our Apologies and for our families. The tree and the circle represent a family group of people called the Forgotten Australians. The coloured leaves symbolise our living brothers and sisters, and the large rhinestones are the many who are no longer with us. The butterflies represent goals for establishing change. The butterfly symbolises transformation and joy and new beginnings: their wings are our wings to move forward. The mirrors reflect our identity. Flowers are a very important occasion in our lives, birthdays, brothers and sisters. Each flower comes with a meaning: beauty, happiness, loneliness, innocence, pride, emotions and remembrance. Hearts and teardrops represent our love towards each other and the many tears we have shared along our long journey to hear the words “Sorry”.’

– Deborah Findlay

Education priorities resulting from the 2024–25 consultations

1

How can you still not know who we are?

2

The tick-box

3

The forgotten forgotten

4

Healthy health services

5

Education! Education! Education!

6

We are family

How can you still not know who we are?



Priority

Forgotten Australians want for all Australians to know the history of Forgotten Australians; for their traumas to be understood; and for Forgotten Australians to be treated with dignity, respect and understanding.

The situation

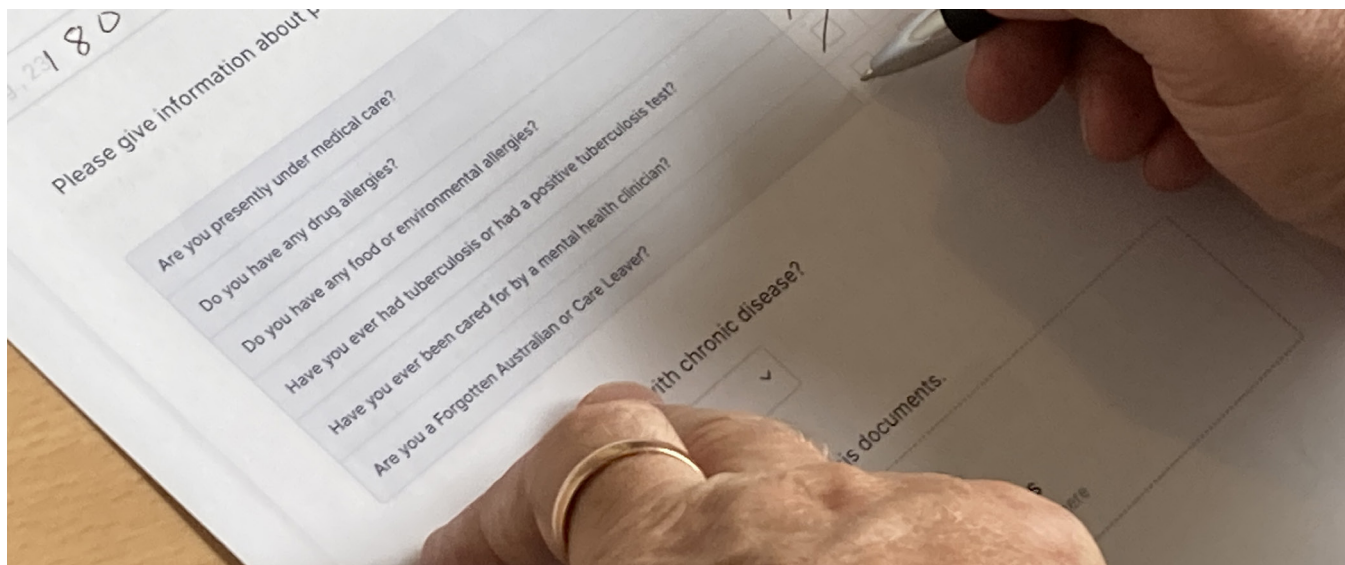
Many people born in Australia before 1990 have a Forgotten Australian in their extended family and/or friendship network, yet most have never heard the term, nor are aware of the significant part Forgotten Australians have played in Australian history.

Aim

That through community education, all Victorians, and services in Victoria, become familiar with the term 'Forgotten Australian'; the place of Forgotten Australians in Australia's history; and that many have suffered because of the treatment and traumatic abuses that occurred in institutional care, as children.

Image: Forgotten Australians, Sally and Barry, at the 'World Within, World Without (Forgotten Australians)' memorial in Southbank, Victoria. This public artwork was created by artist Helen Bodycomb with the support of the Australian and Victorian Governments and the City of Melbourne. It reflects the constellations above Victoria at 11am on 16 November 2009, when Prime Minister Kevin Rudd made his national apology to the 'Forgotten Australians'. Visit citycollection.melbourne.vic.gov.au/world-within-world-without-forgotten-australians

The tick-box



Priority

Forgotten Australians want a process to be able to identify as a Forgotten Australian at all services in Victoria, and to have this met with understanding and empathy.

The situation

Many Forgotten Australians were sexually, physically, emotionally abused and abandoned as children. When identifying as a Forgotten Australian to a service, they are invariably asked, "What does that mean?". This leaves Forgotten Australians feeling demoralised, shamed and unseen.

Aim

For community education to enable all services in Victoria to provide opportunities for Forgotten Australians to identify when using their services, and for all services to know what being a Forgotten Australian means, without needing it to be explained.

The forgotten forgotten



Priority

Forgotten Australians want all Forgotten Australians to know they can identify as a Forgotten Australian; and to be informed of the support available to them.

The situation

Most registered Open Place service users were unaware that support was available for Forgotten Australians through Open Place until they were referred by another person, service or practitioner. Many say they did not even know that there was a term to describe them as a people: Forgotten Australians.

Aim

That through community education, all Forgotten Australians come to know they may identify as a Forgotten Australian; to know that there is support available; to access support if they need it; and to experience a sense of identity, belonging and fellowship with other Forgotten Australians.

Image: Forgotten Australians; Richard, Amanda and George; with the 2024 Parliamentary Apology to Victorians who experienced historical abuse and neglect as children in institutional care.

Healthy health services



Priority

Forgotten Australians want all health, mental health, dental, aged care and palliative care services in Australia to be compassionate and empathetic towards Forgotten Australians, and to develop practices to reduce and prevent re-traumatisation when accessing these services.

This includes aged care facilities, hospitals, dentists, specialists, mental health services, and general practitioners.

The situation

Forgotten Australians who present to aged care and palliative care facilities, hospitals, dentists, specialists, mental health services, and general practitioners in Australia have some of the most complex needs as clients and patients.

For many, these services are a trigger for resurfacing trauma, and traumatic responses. Many health practitioners are not empathetic or aware of how complex childhood trauma affects the mental and physical health and behaviours of Forgotten Australians; and how re-traumatisation can occur when Forgotten Australians access services which are not responsive to their experiences and needs.

Aim

That community education enables all Forgotten Australians to feel safe and heard, and for those who are suffering complex trauma-related health issues to be understood and their needs accommodated empathetically, when accessing aged care and palliative care facilities, hospitals, dentists, specialists, mental health, and general practitioners, to reduce and prevent re-traumatisation.

Education! Education! Education!



Priority

Forgotten Australians want the history, apologies, abuses and inquiries relating to Australia's 20th century institutional care system for children to be included in primary, secondary, and tertiary education curricula in Australia.

The situation

A 2004 Australian Senate Inquiry into Forgotten Australians produced a report indicating more than 500,000 children experienced out-of-home care throughout the 20th century. Since this time there has been a National Apology, a Royal Commission; the historical abuse of children in institutional care in Australia is a regular feature in mainstream media and literature and yet, most Australians still do not know who the Forgotten Australians are.

Aim

That through education, Forgotten Australians find their rightful place in Australia's history, and the mistakes of the past are not repeated.

We are family



Priority

Forgotten Australians want programs and projects to help them build a sense of belonging and identity within the Forgotten Australian community, within the wider community, and within themselves.

The situation

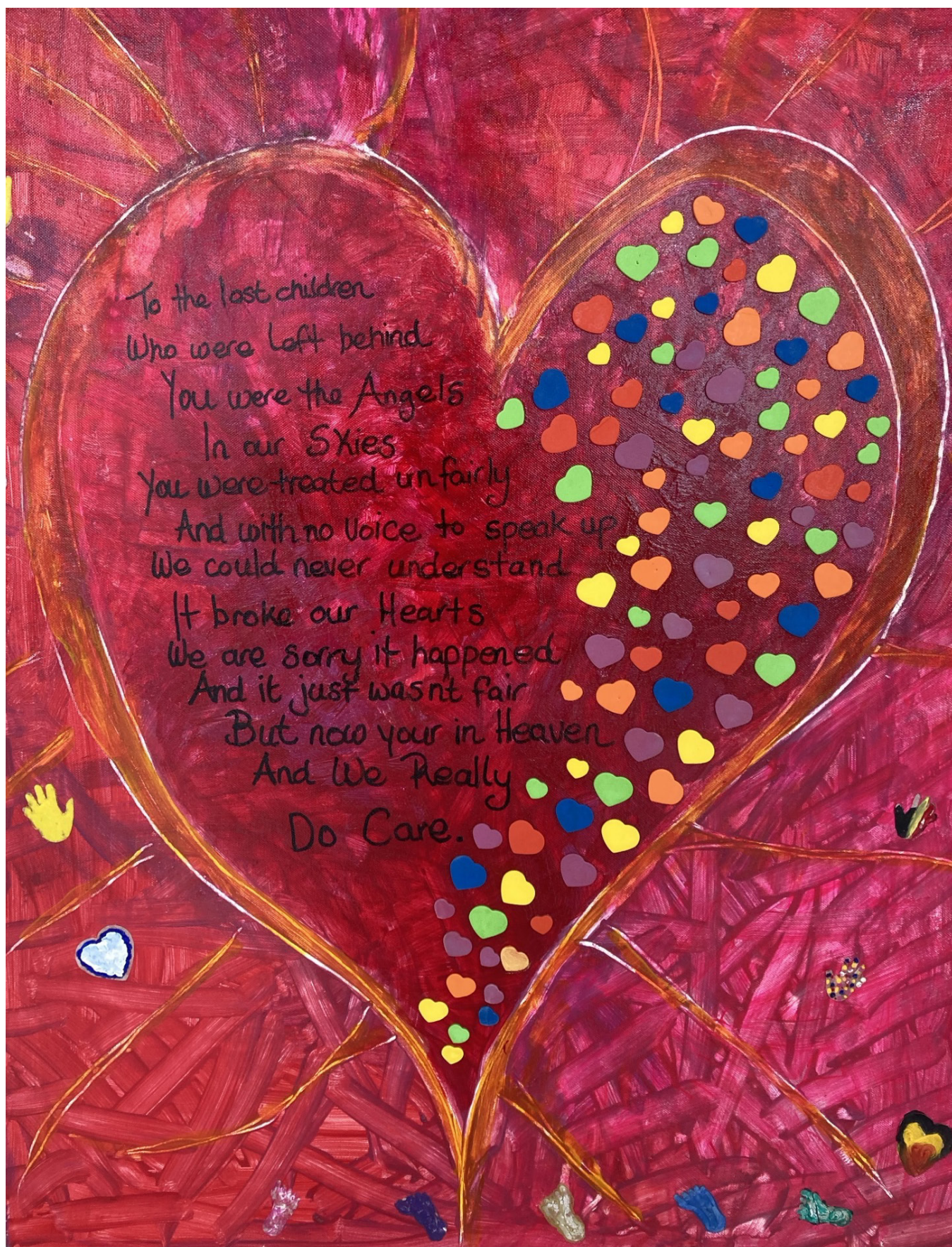
Many Forgotten Australians were deprived of a connection to their biological family. In many cases, this information was cruelly and deliberately kept from them, with some siblings living in the same 'care' facility but denied this knowledge. Many never received correspondences from parents, with letters destroyed or withheld. Others were taken against the will of parents and placed into institutions without any contact again. Many were told their parents were dead, or didn't want them.

Forgotten Australians will often say that other Forgotten Australians are the only family they have ever had or known. Many have hidden their identities as Forgotten Australians, even from their spouses and children.

Aim

For projects and programs to support Forgotten Australians to know they are part of an extended family network, and a wider community network, and to feel proud and empowered to identify as a Forgotten Australian.

Image: Service users at the Open Place Christmas Party 2024.



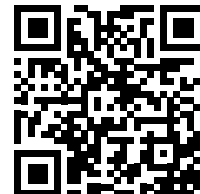
This artwork was created as part of a collaborative effort by Forgotten Australians who had spent time in 'care' at St Joseph's Foundling Hospital/Babies' Home, in Broadmeadows, prior to 1990. It was donated to Open Place by a Forgotten Australian in 2015. It now hangs on the wall at Open Place's office on Belgium Avenue.

Additional resources

Open Place encourages professionals, service providers and community members to learn and share information about Forgotten Australians by accessing the resources below and a variety of reports which are available on our website.

Visit www.openplace.org.au/resources or scan the QR code.

To request printed copies, please email info@openplace.org.au



Supporting Forgotten Australians

Information for organisations and services

This A4 information sheet was designed in consultation with Forgotten Australians to:

- help Forgotten Australians to identify themselves to organisations and service providers
- assist organisations and service providers to provide appropriate, empathetic support to Forgotten Australians
- increase community awareness about what it means to be a Forgotten Australian.



Information about our free services

This DL folded brochure provides information about the services Open Place provides in Victoria. These include coordinated support, counselling, a drop-in centre, health support, redress schemes support, records searches and family reunions, social support groups, community education and community outreach.



References

- 1 Forgotten Australians LOFA Study (Long-term Outcomes of Forgotten Australians Study). 2017. UNSW. 'No Child Should Grow Up Like This: Identifying long term outcomes of Forgotten Australians, Child Migrants and the Stolen Generations.
- 2 Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children. 2004. Commonwealth of Australia.
- 3 (i) 2004 Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care.
(ii) 2012 - 2017 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.
- 4 Consultation notes contained in this report.
- 5 Consultation notes contained in this report.
- 6 Consultation notes contained in this report.



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