



Annual Report 2020-21

1. Background

The Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA) is a national alliance of Forgotten Australians and supporters, who work in partnership to advocate for and promote national policies and services to meet the needs and interests of Forgotten Australians.

Forgotten Australians are a group of around 500,000 Australians who, as children, were placed in orphanages, Homes or other forms of out-of-home 'care' in the 20th century.

2. Vision

The Alliance for Forgotten Australians is committed to recognition and healing for Forgotten Australians and encourages their active engagement in the development of policy and services which are person-centered and strengths-based and which create opportunities and pathways which improves the lives of Forgotten Australians.

3. Mission

AFA's mission is to promote and encourage greater recognition for Forgotten Australians. AFA advocates for national policies and high-quality services available in each state and territory which are tailored to meet the needs and interests of the estimated 500,000 Forgotten Australians. AFA strongly encourages inclusion of Forgotten Australians in service planning and delivery. AFA delegates seek to improve outcomes for all children and young people affected by current child protection systems and policies.

4. History

Formed in 2006, the Alliance is a group of Forgotten Australians and supporters who undertake a national advocacy role. AFA was instrumental in the development of the national network of Find & Connect support services; the National Museum of Australia's exhibition *Inside: Life in children's homes and institutions*; the booklet *Forgotten Australians* and DVD *Forgotten Australians life stories*; and has made a major contribution to policy development for Forgotten Australians in health and aged care. AFA was actively involved in lobbying for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and made a number of submissions to the Commission. AFA was represented on the Independent Advisory Council on Redress; the Reference Group for the National Apology to Victims and Survivors on Institutional Child Sexual

Abuse; the National Memorial Advisory Group; and the Aged Care Grief and Trauma Consultative Group.

5. Governance

5.1 AFA governance for a national peak body advocacy service

AFA is a peak body, made up of ‘any funded support service organisation whose primary purpose is to provide direct support to Forgotten Australians on a daily basis’. It is constituted as a peak body, made up of a combination of Find and Connect support service providers and Forgotten Australians. It is not primarily established to act as a vehicle for broad participation by Forgotten Australians.

Its membership has a majority of Forgotten Australians who also constitute a majority on the Board.

The Australian Government, through the Department of Social Services, funds AFA to bring a united voice to policy discussions. AFA is incorporated under the *ACT Associations Incorporation Act 1991* and subject to the *ACT Associations Incorporation Regulation 1991*. It is a charity registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission.

This legal status has benefits for AFA in enabling it to operate autonomously, limiting its tax liabilities and limiting the liabilities of individual members.

The decision-making structure required by the Associations Incorporation Act and Regulations supports the national advocacy role of AFA.

5.2 Leadership by Forgotten Australians

The Board (committee of management) consists of eight members who are Forgotten Australians, and up to four members who are not Forgotten Australians.

6. Participation by others

If AFA needs other skills or knowledge, it may appoint affiliate non-voting membership to other individuals and organisations ‘with specialist skills and who are able and willing to contribute to the achievement of the Objects of the Association.’

7. Representation of all states and territories

AFA is managed by a Committee of Management (the Board) appointed from the membership.

8. Chairperson’s report

The Covid-19 pandemic continued to change our world in ways we could never have imagined. AFA’s Board was only able to meet once face-to-face, and other meetings of the

Executive and Board members continued via zoom. During 2020-21, we were however able to continue with several initiatives, albeit in different ways.

Initial work on our film *Open Doors* largely took place behind the scenes. *Open Doors* is the story of Bill, a Forgotten Australian, and his first night in residential aged care. We see Bill's anguish as memories of his institutionalisation as a boy return, and we feel Bill's trauma as he realises what it means to turn a full circle in his life.

Iranian-Australian award-winning film maker and graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts, Farshid Akhlaghi was able to shoot the film in a very small window between lockdowns in Melbourne. Featuring Don Bridges as Bill, and Clare Pickering as the nurse, *Open Doors* will be a hard-hitting film intended to make its audience *feel*, rather than being a traditional documentary. The 20-minute film will be launched in November 2021.

In September 2020, AFA made a submission to the second Anniversary Review of the National Redress Scheme, and in addition a submission to government about the ethics and behaviours of some legal firms encouraging survivors to pursue civil litigation rather than making claims under the National Redress Scheme.

AFA was on a panel for two webinars developed in partnership with the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) on the theme of Creating Safe and Inclusive Care for Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers (Caroline Carroll, AFA Chair, on 12 November 2020 [Creating safe and inclusive care for Forgotten Australians/Care Leavers - Older Persons Advocacy Network \(opan.com.au\)](#); and Navigating Aged Care Services for Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers. Pamella Vernon, AFA's Vice President, on 26 November 2020 [Navigating Aged Care Services for Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers - Older Persons Advocacy Network \(opan.com.au\)](#)).

AFA is now represented on the National Aged Care and Community Care Roundtable. This is an emerging forum which brings together a number of stakeholders and disparate threads relating to Forgotten Australians / care leavers and aged care.

Caroline Carroll OAM
Chair
10 November 2021

9. Secretary's report

Covid-19 and widespread lockdowns have meant that the Life Stories project was largely conducted through telephone interviews. We have undertaken the project as an action learning experience, reflecting on the progress of the project and its impact on Forgotten Australians and writers at each step of the way. The evaluations from Forgotten Australians who have completed their stories have been overwhelmingly positive, with participants reporting that they felt safe, respected and satisfied. Several acknowledged that the recording of their story has been an important step in their journey of healing.

It took a substantial lead time to set up project – from basics such as consent forms, to recruitment of writers, all with minimum supporting infrastructure. Telling and recording a

life story is not linear – it requires time for reflection, recovery, pauses for periods of ill health, and for some, the choice to discontinue.

We expect to have 60 stories finalised and printed by the end of 2021, at which time the project will be completed. While the funding for the project is modest, and the complexity and sensitivity of the project greater than anticipated, the work we have undertaken establishes a solid groundwork should the Department of Social Services wish to build on this pilot to create a more substantial program in the future.

Simon Gardiner
Secretary
10 November 2021

10. Treasurer's report

I present the financial results for the Alliance for Forgotten Australians at 30th June, 2021.

The financial activity for the year reflects the budget strategy, with a net result for the year an underspend of \$76,925.

The underspend reflects the remainder of the \$200,000 which was paid in advance by DSS to AFA in June 2020 for the Life Stories project, to be undertaken in 2020-21, with a completion date of December 2021.

In contrast to previous years, expenditure on travel was less due to the pandemic. The increase in expenditure on consultants, materials and supplies reflects spending on the *Open Doors* film, and includes the film maker, crew and equipment. Expenditure on consultants also covers payments to Life Stories writers.

Grant income from the Department of Social Services was expended to actively promote the awareness and represent the needs of Forgotten Australians.

I have confidence in the financial accountability and thank the Board and staff for their support and work.

Reg Casley
Treasurer
10 November 2021