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## NEWSLETTER

# Report calls to deinstitutionalise aged care

⌚ Katarina Lloyd Jones (<https://www.australianageingagenda.com.au/author/klloydjones>) ⓘ November 25, 2025

*Providers have a 'moral obligation' to address the needs of care leavers, Wintringham CEO Jane Barnes tells AAA following the release of the Care Leavers report.*



Jane Barnes with residential aged care client Danny in Melbourne (Wintringham)

A national investigation into the ageing experiences of older adults who spent part or all of their childhoods in institutional, or out-of-home care, has resulted in eight key policy and practice recommendations.

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The investigation was led by the National Centre for Healthy Ageing in partnership with Monash University and Peninsula Health and involved a survey of 105 care leavers aged 50 years or older, including 24 in-depth interviews and three focus groups with aged care professionals.

Participants reported extensive abuse, neglect, loss of education and dehumanisation as defining parts of their experience in childhood institutions, which left long-term scars in their trust of systems and impacted on their health, access to housing and relationships.

The Voice of Care Leavers report also found institutional harm flowed into adult life, including high rates of chronic illness, disability, mental health conditions, family violence, limited engagement in education, employment and involvement in the criminal justice system for some.

This sees a guarded engagement with aged care, with the option of residential care being overwhelmingly rejected by care leavers.

## Targeted support essential

Wintringham chief executive officer Jane Barnes told *Australian Ageing Agenda* that there is a “recognised moral obligation” to address the needs of care leavers in aged care settings – referencing the 2004 Senate inquiry into the experiences of Forgotten Australians and the 2009 National Apology.

Care leavers may have significant anxieties about entering aged care homes and each will have individual experiences that can result in varying and unpredictable triggers, she said.

“Targeted supports are essential to assist care leavers with managing the additional stresses of accessing aged care and to minimise the risk of re-traumatisation,” Ms Barnes told AAA.

“These supports should begin as soon as care leavers start exploring their options and choosing an aged care provider. Assistance should continue through the orientation and admission processes into the care home, including checking in with the new resident regarding their perceptions of care.

“This level of sensitivity and additional reflective checking in, needs to be an ongoing process, as trauma triggers may arise at any stage, sometimes long after admission.”



(iStock/coldsnowstorm)

## POLL

### The new Aged Care Act is due to commence in less than 10 weeks – how ready are you?

100 per cent ready and raring to go

getting close but not quite there

we've started making headway but still a lot to do

not at all – I'm counting on another delay

## VOTE

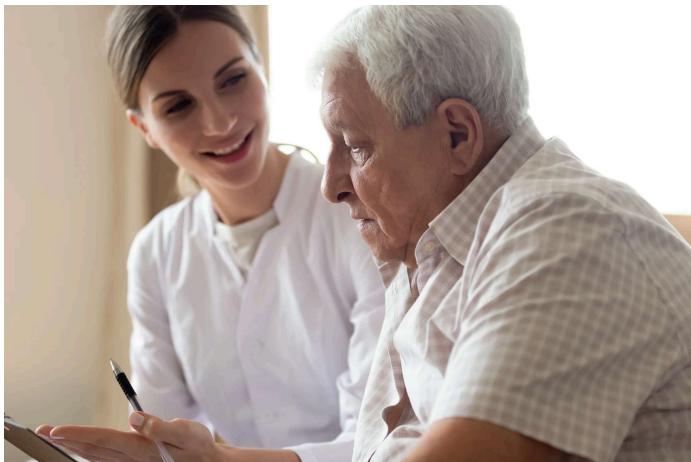
## Care should be safe and consistent

In the Monash University and Peninsula Health investigation, authors Philip Mendes, Susan Baidawi, Sarah Morris and Lena Turnbull pointed to eight key policy and practice recommendations, including:

1. embed a foundation of trauma-informed aged care
2. expand priority access to services that support ageing in place for care leavers
3. expand the Care Finder program
4. deinstitutionalise residential aged care and develop specialised alternatives
5. strengthen the role of care leaver agencies
6. embed lived experience and advocacy into system reform
7. address workforce instability to ensure services are safe, consistent and relational
8. develop a standalone First Nations-led response for Stolen Generations care leavers.

As an organisation focused on the aged care needs of people who have been homeless – with recognition of the specialist needs of sub-groups like care leavers – Wintringham has embedded a foundation of trauma-informed aged care since its inception, Ms Barnes noted.

It is also the largest Care Finder program provider in Victoria and has actively supported its expansion.



(iStock.com/fizkes)

Ms Barnes added that Wintringham has developed and embedded a new social support case manager role in aged care homes, with professionally trained staff who work collaboratively as part of multidisciplinary care teams to provide a holistic approach to psycho-social care.

"Wintringham has been supported by the Alliance for Forgotten Australians to develop training materials to raise awareness of care leavers' experiences and their potential vulnerabilities," Ms Barnes continued.

"This material combines historical context with reflective elements and practical tips for staff. We have trialled this training with our intake workers and care finders, as this group of staff are most likely to make first contact.

"We are also developing information banners with QR code video links to circulate throughout all our residential aged care homes so we can reach more staff working various shifts."

Supporting care leavers does not require a new approach in aged care, Ms Barnes clarified.

"Rather, it involves making sure staff are well-trained and knowledgeable and that sensitive service processes are in place. All aged care provision needs to be trauma-informed in line with the new Aged Care Act and Standards."

"The types of sensitive, person-centred, empowering and trauma-informed supports needed for care leavers, should be universally provided to all aged care recipients."

The complete Voices of Care Leavers report can be read [here](https://apo.org.au/node/332820) (<https://apo.org.au/node/332820>).

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