

ALLIANCE FOR THE FORGOTTEN AUSTRALIANS

VOICE *Newsletter*

Communicating with AFA's supporters, members and allies is critical. The VOICE Newsletter provides news and updates about our work with and on behalf of Forgotten Australians across the country.

Funding breakthrough

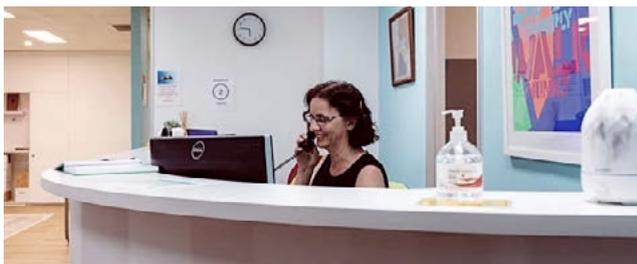
Find & Connect services extended until June 2028

As consistently advocated by AFA and its supporters, ongoing government support of the Find & Connect Services is vital to the continued needs of victim-survivors affected by their time in institutional care.

Last November, those advocacy efforts paid off, with the Australian Government announcing a two-year extension for Find & Connect. It will ensure 11 existing providers continue to deliver vital services until June 2028.

This work is incredibly important. Across 2024-25, Find & Connect assisted more than 3,700 individuals access services such as specialist counselling, peer support, referral services, group sessions, education and social support programs.

This is in addition to locating records and reconnecting victim-survivors with their families.



"Nothing will take away the pain experienced by children who grew up in institutions, orphanages and children's homes," said Minister for Social Services, Tanya Plibersek, "but helping to reconnect these adults with family members, or better understand their family history can have an enormous impact.

"That's why we're extending funding for Find & Connect to help victim-survivors uncover their history, trace and reclaim their identities, and build relationships with their families."

 **To access Find & Connect Support Services, you can call 1800 16 11 09 or visit findandconnect.gov.au**

Memorial dedicated to Forgotten Australians unveiled in Tasmania

As reported in previous newsletters, largely due to the tireless efforts of Tasmanian-based AFA Board member, Dave Henderson, a memorial in Glenorchy was in the final stages of development.

Now that work is complete. On 19 November 2025, the new memorial was unveiled at Tolosa Park in Glenorchy, marking the National Apology to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants. It was a special and well-attended occasion. At the unveiling, attendees were asked to dress in white as a unified gesture supporting Forgotten Australians. The memorial, created with input from Forgotten Australians, Relationships Australia Tasmania and Glenorchy City Council, is positioned near Dominic College – formerly Boys’ Town – to reflect local history.



Sue Hickey, Mayor of Glenorchy, with Dave Henderson.

Community members, advocates and officials attended the ceremony.

The event included a Welcome to Country by Palawa man Cody and stories from Forgotten Australians. Attendees from across the state participated, culminating in the memorial’s unveiling. Fittingly, as tribute to Dave Henderson’s persistence and vision, a plaque on a seat at the site states:



‘David Henderson, In honour of a passionate advocate whose voice changed how Forgotten Australians are remembered’.

Appreciation must be extended to the Glenorchy City Council for its considerate support. The council helped to foster a genuine sense of community. Although the weather threatened rain, it held off, allowing everyone to come together to celebrate resilience, remember the past and reflect in a space now dedicated to acknowledgement and healing.





Canberra advocacy update: amplifying the voices of Forgotten Australians

Key outcomes from recent parliamentary engagements

In late October 2025, representatives from the Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA), Suzanne Burke and Cathy Humphrey, travelled to Canberra to champion the health, housing and aged care needs of Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers. Over a busy two-day period, Suzanne and Cathy met with nine Members of Parliament and their advisers, forging crucial connections that will strengthen AFA's ongoing advocacy efforts.

A highlight of the visit was the discussions with Dr Monique Ryan MP and Dr Mike Freeland MP, which focused on the urgent need for improved dental care across the country for Forgotten Australians. Both MPs offered strong support for AFA's commitment to launch a coordinated campaign in the new year, recognising the importance of amplifying the voices and experiences of those who suffered in institutional settings.

These meetings provided an invaluable platform to remind policymakers of the existence and ongoing challenges faced by Forgotten Australians. Importantly, the conversations reinforced the lasting impact of institutional care and the necessity for targeted services in health, housing and aged care.

As we plan our activities for 2026, AFA's advocacy will continue, with further meetings already on the agenda. Strengthening relationships with key decision-makers remains central to achieving meaningful change and ensuring that the needs of Forgotten Australians stay firmly on the national agenda.

We thank all those involved for their ongoing support and commitment to this vital work.



AFA's Cathy Humphrey (left) and Suzanne Burke, pictured with Dr Monique Ryan MP at Parliament House.

Landmark report *to be seen* launched at Open Place

Last November, more than 60 Forgotten Australians and their supporters gathered at Open Place in Melbourne for the launch the Forgotten Australians Community Education Report and *Priorities: to be seen*.

This report outlines strategies to educate Victorians about Forgotten Australians. It features accounts from 195 adults who grew up in institutional care; their primary wish is for understanding, dignity and recognition. As well as Forgotten Australians, there were representatives present from relevant organisations and government bodies. Those assembled heard music from Forgotten Australian, Alan Bowles, and then speeches by Open Place's Michelle McDonald and Richard Dove, Relationships Australia's Dr Andrew Bickerdike and Maree Holt from AFA.

A statement of support from Sarah Witty MP, federal member for Melbourne, was read.

“Despite the advocacy of so many, the Senate inquiries, State and National Apologies and redress schemes,” said Ms McDonald, introducing the report, “the Forgotten Australian story remains largely unknown within the Australian community and within services and agencies that Forgotten Australians need to engage with. Forgotten Australians will never get their childhood back. However, through active community education on the part of all of us, their story can be told and understood, and they can be treated with dignity and respect.”

Maree Holt accepted a copy of the report on behalf of AFA.



AFA board member Maree Holt (left) with Open Place senior manager, Michelle McDonald and Chloe Lin, a project officer from Relationships Australia, South Australia.

Richard Dove spoke about Open Place's 2024 March for Forgotten Australians, the 2009 apology and 20th institutional care in Australia. He also discussed the experiences and aspirations conveyed to him by Forgotten Australians during the “to be seen” consultation process.

‘Open Place and Relationships Australia Victoria are committed to achieving the six priorities of *to be seen*,’ said Dr Bickerdike, “enabling Forgotten Australians to participate in life in ways that are equitable to other Victorians, and reducing the complex psychological, social, and physical health issues many presently endure.”

We encourage you to read the report and share it with your colleagues, networks and communities. To request printed copies of the report please email info@openplace.org.au or call (03) 9421 6162.

Sixth edition of purple book released

A number of guides have been produced since AFA's inception, designed to provide assistance to those dealing with and caring for Forgotten Australians.

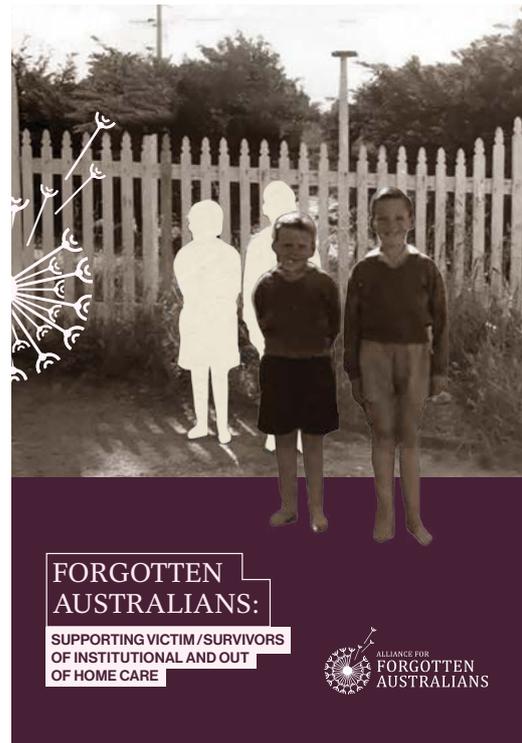
Forgotten Australians: supporting victim / survivors of institutional and out of home care, more commonly known as the 'Purple Book', is perhaps the most enduring. Testament to its impact and renown, a sixth edition was released in February 2026. It is the first update of the booklet since 2016.

As well as a refreshed design, the contents have been updated to include references to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and National Apology to Victims and Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse.

There are also numerous updates to the various sections, reflecting changing definitions, impact of institutionalisation and new references. Of note, the AFA Board was firm in its resolve to include an overview of spiritual abuse – the exploitation of religious or spiritual power to manipulate, dominate or control others, leading to harm – and its potential lifelong impact.

Further, the Purple Book implores all who work with Forgotten Australians to heed their concerns as many transition into aged care:

The fear being institutionalised again is all too real as Forgotten Australians age. A retirement home may seem pleasant but the memory of their helplessness in the face of ill treatment can provoke resistance and terror.



Designed to inform and assist doctors, nurses, mental health professionals, dentists, social workers, counsellors and welfare workers, *Forgotten Australians: supporting victim / survivors of institutional and out of home care* can be downloaded from here or ordered via the email address below.



Hard copies of the purple book can be ordered from admin@forgottenaustralians.org.au



Maree Holt (left) with Fran Jenkins (Good Shepherd), Trish Ward (FA) and Andrea Stent (GS).

Good Shepherd memorial at Abbotsford gets facelift

In February 2018, Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand unveiled a memorial at the Abbotsford Convent to honour the girls, women and children who lived in their institutions. Located in the chapel's garden, it features a steel cylinder engraved with words from former residents – such as shame, courage, fear, dreams, friendship, forgotten, anger – acknowledging their experiences.

Unfortunately, the cylinder began to rust. It was decided to refurbish it last year, as well as introduce some new plants and clean up the site. The upgraded memorial was unveiled in December, attended by former residents, including AFA board member Maree Holt, and staff representatives from Good Shepherd.

“There’s a nice steel ribbon there now,” said Maree. “There are eight words on the ribbon; four positive ones and four negative ones. We were having a meeting and the staff wanted to know our thoughts and our experiences.”



Join the fight for fair oral health for seniors and Forgotten Australians

No one should suffer pain or embarrassment because they cannot afford to see a dentist. AFA keeps pushing for dental care on Medicare because dignity matters.

The inclusion of dental treatment under Medicare for all seniors is long overdue. By influencing public policy and fostering widespread community support we can make it happen.

Cost of dental care causing delays in treatment
Many ageing Forgotten Australians / Care Leavers are postponing essential dental visits because of financial constraints. This delay often results in not only worsening oral health, but also contributes to broader health complications. Without regular check-ups and timely treatment, minor dental issues escalate into more serious problems, increasing discomfort and impacting overall wellbeing.

It is well documented that poor childhood dental care contributes to lifelong oral health issues and considering the well-documented neglect and lack of medical attention many Forgotten Australians/Care Leavers experienced in institutions, they are at elevated risk for untreated dental diseases.

What are the facts?

Many older people, particularly Forgotten Australians, encounter major obstacles in accessing oral health services, which adversely impacts their overall wellbeing. Here is the reality:

- Seniors delay dental visits due to the cost
- Oral health problems can lead to serious medical issues
- Seniors have an average of 14 missing teeth
- One in four avoid certain foods because of dental pain
- Some are forced to wait up to five years for public dental care

Our call for a dental program for seniors is backed by the Australian Greens, Dr Monique Ryan (Member for Kooyong) and Dr Mike Freedlander (Member for Macarthur)



Personal testimonies

“I’m missing many bottom teeth,” says Mary, “and others are crooked and rotten. Raised in an orphanage in the 1960s, I don’t even remember having toothpaste.”

“I had to wait a whole year before they gave me my dentures,” says Chrissy. “Going out in public was embarrassing; it was really hard and demeaning.”



What needs to change?

- Medicare should cover dental care for seniors
- This will remove financial barriers, prevent pain and protect dignity

Add your voice

- Email or write to your local MP and demand dental care under Medicare
- You can find your MP here: aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members
- Details will be added to the AFA website shortly www.forgottenaustralians.org.au – including a template letter to send to your local member of parliament
- Flyers about the campaign will be available at Find & Connect Services in the coming weeks

Wattle Place observes 16th anniversary of the apology to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants

The Apology marked a key recognition of the harm suffered by children in welfare institutions and foster homes before 1990. It signified the government's acceptance of responsibility for failing to protect these children and ensured their experiences were validated, especially for those whose accounts had been dismissed.



Forgotten Australians and staff from Wattle Place at their gathering to mark the 16th anniversary of the National Apology. (Image courtesy of Daryl Higgins)

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Wattle Place, the specialist service of Relationships Australia NSW for people affected by out-of-home care, forced adoption, or institutional child sexual abuse, held a morning tea the day after the anniversary.

"Although attendance was modest it was useful for the Wattle Place Advocacy Group to get together," said Daryl Higgins, a director of AFA since 2019. "We used the occasion to discuss the need for further promotion of Forgotten Australians, as well as plan ahead for the 20th anniversary of the Apology.

"While our history has been recognised officially by state and federal governments, the vast majority of Australians are unaware of who Forgotten Australians are, what went we through as children, or how those childhoods shaped the rest of our lives."

Wattle Place release a statement marking the 16th anniversary. It read in part:

The Anniversaries are an important opportunity to thank and honour the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants who steadfastly fought for recognition, acknowledgement and validation. It is thanks to them that the 2004 Senate Inquiry was held and thanks to them that support services like Wattle Place and others exist.

On this anniversary, we support their continued calls for justice and ongoing support. The impacts from their childhoods continue to have an influence throughout their lives. The wider community is still largely unaware of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants or their stories. We continue to advocate for their stories to become well-known, as part of Australia's history.

‘Let no child walk this path again’ – The short and brutal history of Hay Institution for Girls



The Hay Institution for Girls, located in the Riverina district of New South Wales, was established in 1961 at the former Hay Gaol as an annex to Parramatta Girls Training School. It initially housed 12 girls aged 15 to 18 who had committed offences at Parramatta, including rioting in response to their treatment.

Though intended as a three-month placement, confinement often lasted longer, with repeated transfers between Hay and Parramatta. Transfers occurred usually at night, with girls escorted by officers on train journeys and sedated during transit.

From the moment they arrived, control was absolute. Their hair was cut short, institutional clothing issued and they were placed in a “scrubbing” cell for around ten days. After this, they were confined to solitary cabins for the rest of their time at Hay, each furnished with little more than a narrow bed, thin mattress, basic bedding, a Bible and a night can.

Life at Hay was governed by a rigid and punitive discipline. Officers dictated every movement and word, enforcing a routine designed to break resistance through humiliation. Silence was mandatory, communication permitted only through formal reports, with the girls required to stand six feet apart and keep their eyes fixed on the floor. They were denied privacy, visitors, mail and schooling. Instead, their days were filled with relentless manual labour along with compulsory physical exercises.

The Hay Institution aimed to break the spirit of those placed in its care, a grim objective it sadly often fulfilled; many former residents suffered lasting physical and psychological harm, including severe PTSD. Some attempted suicide. Due to widespread community concern about how the girls were treated and protests led by Sydney women’s movement leaders, the institution was officially closed on 30 June 1974.

The Riverine

Registered in Australia for transmission by post as a Newspaper. PUBLISHED AT HAY, N.S.W. —TUESDAY AN
Price 6d. FRIDAY, 10th AUGUST, 1962.

Reports of “Pitiful Screaming” From Girls’ Home

REPORTS from residents of East Hay stated that “pitiful screams” had been heard last Saturday from the Girls Institution, established a year ago in Hay.

This week the Department of Child Welfare acknowledged that such screams did take place, but that “her screams were not caused by ill-treatment but were an example of a previously common pattern of response from this girl when frustrated or subjected to ordinary stress”.

The Department sets out more fully in a statement the purpose and objects of the training at the Institution for Girls at Hay.

Robbery at Red Hill

Last week end the homestead at Red Hill was broken into and a large quantity of household and personal goods stolen.

The homestead, the property of Mr. T. H. Simpson, is on a lonely road ten miles off the Sturt Highway.

Sometime between Friday and Monday, some one broke into the house and removed a large amount of household property and a good deal of personal property including guns and photographic treated at over £500 worth.

Hay Police have been investigating but so far have not been able to trace the offenders.



So bad was the abuse, from the superintendent down, the NSW Public Service Board at the time brought claims of misconduct – “disgraceful or improper” – against multiple members of the Hay staff. Those accused resigned and never faced criminal prosecution.

Evidence at the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse tendered by former inmates included recounting rapes, bashing, food deprivation, being kicked and thrown down stairs.

The first reunion for former residents took place in March 2007, when a memorial plaque was unveiled on the grounds with the inscription:

“Let no child walk this path again.”

Voices of Care Leavers: ageing with dignity after childhood institutionalisation

Another important study examining the lives of Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers was published in October 2025. Authored by Philip Mendes, Susan Baidawi, Sarah Morris and Lena Turnbull, the study was the result of a collaboration between Monash University and Peninsula Health in Victoria.

The study found persistent issues like abuse, neglect, poor education and ongoing problems with health, housing and trust. Most prefer home or community-based support over residential aged care. Recommendations include trauma-informed care, involving care leavers in service planning, consistent caregivers, and non-institutional settings.

“Participants called for specialised training for aged care workers to ensure they understand the triggers, anxieties and unique needs of care leavers,” said co-author Professor Mendes.

There were numerous key findings and themes, including:

- **Lifelong disadvantage:** Childhood abuse, neglect and institutionalisation lead to chronic health issues, mental health struggles, housing instability and difficulties in education, employment and relationships, creating “formative harm”.
- **Premature ageing:** Care leavers often experience physical and psychological decline earlier, linked to unresolved trauma and lifelong hardship.
- **Mistrust and trauma sensitivity:** Deep-seated mistrust of systems and heightened sensitivity to institutional environments (like locked doors, rules, strangers, etc.) are common, making traditional aged care settings feel like re-traumatisation.
- **Dignity and autonomy:** Participants strongly prefer home-based or community-based care that fosters independence, consistency and respect for their unique histories, rather than institutional settings.



Key recommendations included:

- **Trauma-informed care:** Aged care must be built on trauma-informed principles, understanding the specific needs of Forgotten Australians.
- **Person-centred support:** Tailored, individualised support is crucial, moving away from one-size-fits-all approaches.
- **Improved home and community care:** Better home and community care options are needed, designed with input from care leavers.
- **System navigation support:** Simplified information and support from people with lived experience are essential for navigating complex aged care systems.



The researchers believe their study offers valuable insights for policymakers and service providers seeking to reform aged care. The report can be downloaded [here](#).

National Centre for Healthy Ageing funded study

A partnership between





Life Stories library collection: preserving the voices of Forgotten Australians

AFA is proud to share an important milestone in the ongoing effort to honour, preserve and amplify the lived experiences of Forgotten Australians. Through the Life Stories Project, 60 participants were supported to tell their personal stories – stories of courage, resilience, identity and reconnection.

Each story was carefully crafted with the help of a dedicated team of writers who have extensive experience working alongside Forgotten Australians. Every participant received 20 printed copies of their completed story, including photos and personal documents. Importantly, each contributor retains ownership of their story and decides how it may be shared.

A project with purpose

The Life Stories Project was established to provide a safe, supported space for participants to:

- Reclaim identity through the power of personal storytelling
- Foster emotional and psychological healing
- Reconnect with family members and strengthen personal relationships

A structured storytelling model ensured participants' wellbeing remained central throughout the entire process.

Now available at the State Library of Victoria (SLV)

We are deeply grateful to the participants who generously agreed to make their stories part of a publicly accessible collection.

These life stories now form part of the Manuscript Collection at the SLV, ensuring their voices will be preserved for generations to come.

To explore the collection:

- Visit the SLV website: slv.vic.gov.au/
- Search for "Forgotten Australian Life Stories"
- Access is available on-site at the library only.

For assistance, contact the library on **(03) 8664 7002**.

Contributors to the collection

The 30 individuals who consented to make their stories available include:

Bernadette Allison, Dianne Berechree, Alan Bowles, Robert Cox, Douglas Goulter, David Hall, Robin Henwood, Daryl Higgins, Barry Jacobsen, Brett Kersten, Brian Laing, Helen Laing, Lois Harper, Therese Williams, Raymond Edward McDermott, Maureen Redpath, Mr Rev Comrade Rowley, Lana Syed (Bambi), Priscilla Taylor, Ken Waldron, Suzanne Dickerson (Burke), Mary Brownlee, Eve Warren, Heather Meachem, Sandi Ridge, Lesley Walkerden, Geoff Steele, Terence-Paul Mackenzie Copley, Dwayne Mussared and Barry Bourke.

For enquiries about the Life Stories Project or the Library Collection, please contact our Executive Officer, Cathy, at admin@forgottenaustralians.org.au

Getting involved in AFA's advocacy work

The Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA) warmly encourages you to join our continuing efforts to secure justice, dignity, and healing for Forgotten Australians. There are many meaningful ways you can participate and help create real change.

Local connections: Get in touch with your state or territory's Find and Connect Service. These organisations offer support and resources specifically for Forgotten Australians. You can find contact information and additional details on the AFA website.

Join events and forums: AFA frequently organises events and forums to provide education, exchange experiences and foster community support. Announcements for upcoming events are made ahead of time – visit the website to stay informed about the latest news.

Participate in advocacy campaigns: The Alliance leads a range of advocacy initiatives throughout the year. By participating in these campaigns, you contribute to raising awareness and advancing systemic change.

Another significant opportunity for involvement is through the National Aged & Community Care Roundtable for Forgotten Australians. This forum brings together Forgotten Australians, other Care Leavers, professionals and organisations from across the country.

The collective objective is to enhance the accessibility, suitability, and quality of aged and community care services. Ongoing engagement is essential – visit the AFA website regularly for the latest updates and announcements.

 **If you are interested in joining the Roundtable or any related initiative, please submit an expression of interest via their website: forgottenaustraliansroundtable.com.au**





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Issue 03, February 2026

Alliance for Forgotten Australians
Email: admin@forgottenaustralians.org.au
Website: forgottenaustralians.org.au

Still unfinished business, still fighting for justice.



Australian Government
Department of Social Services