

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.

## From sleeping rough to a career in it A journey of resilience for one forgotten Australian

**Of all the ironies in the life of Daryl Higgins, AFA board member and Forgotten Australian, there is one that provides the most indelible memory.**

For Daryl was born in Mount Street, North Sydney, the very street which housed – and still does – the headquarters of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart, the order responsible for the orphanage where a four-year old Daryl was taken in a state of anguish. “We were playing street cricket,” recalled Daryl. “It was a hot day and I came into the house to get a drink of water. Outside the house was a truck, three nuns and two police. I was scooped up with two of my brothers and put on the back of the truck.”

Daryl and his siblings were driven two hours away to St Joseph's Orphanage, Kincumber, on the Central Coast of New South Wales. The orphanage opened in 1887 and more than 2,500 children passed through it by the time St Joseph's closed in 1979.



Now retired, married and the proud father of three children, Daryl's journey encompassed abuse, homelessness, living itinerantly and jobs ranging from shearing to commercial laundries before he found his calling in IT.

In 2014 he provided testimony to the Royal Commission into

Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse about his experiences at Kincumber and elsewhere.

*“I was told that my mother was having hearing problems,” said Daryl, “and the fact that my father wasn't Catholic did not go down well with the Sisters of St Joseph. So they decreed that we couldn't be looked after properly. I was there up to the age of nine.”*



Daryl (front) with his dad and two of his brothers



Image courtesy of Gosford Library

**Could you talk about some of those orphanage experiences, good, bad or indifferent?**

Being the youngest boy at Kincumber by far, I didn't attend school when the other boys had to. In fact I didn't attend school there at all, and I was almost nine when I left. I had the roam of the old place, which didn't go too well down with the other boys, so I got picked on many a time. Once I was forced to hold an electric fence, grab hold of it. The boys and the nuns thought that was a lot of fun.

**Did the nuns treat you reasonably well?**

When they treated you well, they were absolutely beautiful, but unfortunately they were also physically and sexually active. So was the priest, the one who had a residence on the grounds of the orphanage. He was also the parish priest for Kincumber. He had a dubious reputation. I was impacted – that's all I'll say about it. Mum and dad both died when I was in the orphanage and I couldn't go to the funeral.

**What happened at the age of nine for you to go into the foster care system?**

At that age you just go with the flow and do what you're told. The foster home was difficult. It was in Gladesville, in Sydney. They were strict and very religious. There was no warmth. To give you an example, on a birthday I was given one sock. When I was 14 one day I came home and the place was locked up and my suitcase was at the front door. I had to go and find somewhere to live and with the little suitcase I had.

**When you look back at those formative years, how do you view them?**

The best thing was that when I was fostered, I was sent to a Catholic college for schooling – Holy Cross College in Ryde. I was playing catch up right until third year of high school, but I'm pleased that I did have some form of education.

**I understand you then lived rough for four or five years.**

I lived in the bush at Hunter's Hill. I knew the area quite well. I picked up a job delivering telegrams and another one stacking shelves at the grocery store. Then I started hitchhiking up the coast to Queensland, mainly because I could sit comfortably and have a snooze if I wanted to when I got a lift. Sometimes though, when I got dropped off outside of town, I'd start walking and if no one picked me up, I'd sleep on the side of the road. Occasionally, I was so hungry I would eat grass.

**How did you get yourself out of this situation?**

I went back to North Sydney and heard someone mention a computer. I thought, what in the bloody hell is a computer? So I made some inquiries and I applied with Telecom (now Telstra) as what was called a clerical assistant. I did that for about eight months and then they took out a national ad for people to become computer operators.

**And just for the record, how many brothers and sisters do you have?**

Four brothers and one sister.

**In your adult years did you want to re-establish connections with your siblings?**

With the brothers I did, but my sister though, unfortunately, I was told that she wasn't well. I drove all the way to Adelaide but didn't make it in time. At that stage, I had begun to attend Wattle Place. One of my brothers had mentioned it to me.

**What do you get out of Wattle Place?**

It was really, really good because there's a lot of people turn up to Wattle Place. We all just had a good laugh and have sandwiches, cup of coffee, things like that. Hardly anyone talked about their past and if they did, they soon got the message we don't do that.

**But there are reminders of your own past ...**

I'll give you an example. Two weekends ago I went up the Central Coast actually to Kincumber. My grandson was playing soccer up there. The name of the oval was Patrick Croke Oval. That's the name of the priest. It made me feel sick.

**So that was the name of the priest that did some damage to you?**

Yeah. Now, I thought maybe I will go to the council and get them to change the name of the oval. Even if it was just to Patrick, because no one knew him as Patrick, he was always Father Croke. I don't like using the word 'father' either.

**Daryl, given your life experience, the family of your own, and reconnecting with your siblings, it's a remarkable story of resilience. You've actually flourished.**

I'm pleased with what I've done because I have a great relationship. I've got a wife who looks after me and annoyingly loves the garden. So when she buys things, I'm the one who has to put them in the garden!

**Is there anything else that you'd like to add?**

My main objective now is to get recognition for Forgotten Australians. And that's why at the last AFA forum, they've accepted my proposal of having one week a year dedicated to Forgotten Australians Awareness Week. That's what we're working on now.

Readers seeking support can contact the following services:

**Find and Connect**

- 1800 16 11 09
- [findandconnect.gov.au](http://findandconnect.gov.au)

**Forced Adoption Support Services**

- 1800 210 313
- [dss.gov.au](http://dss.gov.au)

**Wattle Place (NSW only)**

- 1800 663 844
- [wattleplace.org.au](http://wattleplace.org.au)



Daryl with his grandson

# AFA concerned over availability of care leavers' records after 99 years

**Care leaver records in Victoria – including former state ward and child protection files – are primarily held by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) and the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV).**

Because these documents contain private, sensitive information about children, they are legally closed to the general public for 99 years (care leavers and their families have a right to access them and can do so free of charge).

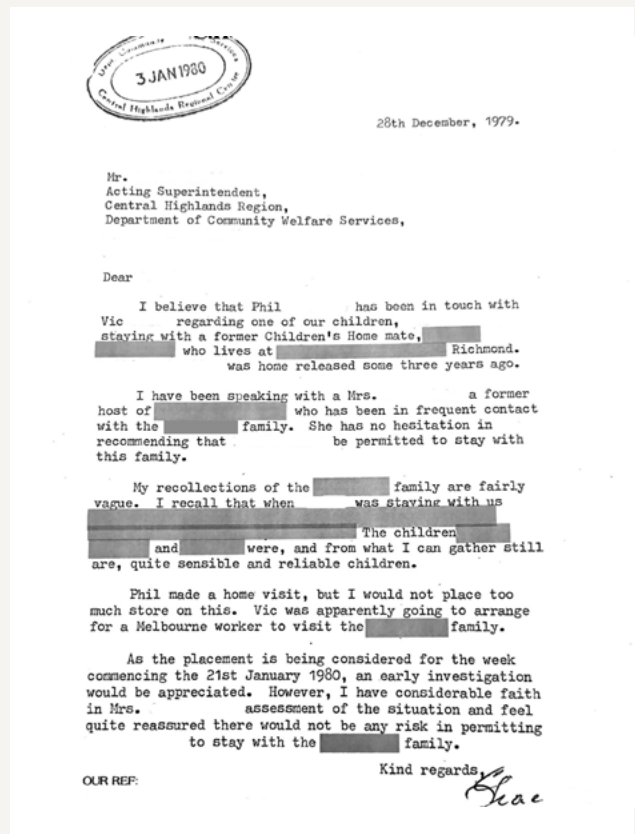
However, as care leaver Deb Findlay discovered, after 99 years the records will become publicly available on the PROV website – including parts of the records that are currently redacted.

“After 99 years of the creation of these records, they automatically get put online and it's the full record,” said Deb. “There are no redactions in it. But if I was to reapply for mine today, it's full of redactions. It means the general public will read everything while I have been denied.

“I totally disagree with what Victoria is doing. DFFH is misleading Forgotten Australians into believing their wardship records are private. This is not the case – it is another betrayal of trust.”

Deb has worked tirelessly to shed light on the policy. She organised face-to-face meetings with her local state and federal MPs and has corresponded with Natalie Hutchins, the former minister for Government Services in the Victorian Government. While acknowledging the sensitivities associated with this matter, the Minister did not commit to further addressing Deb's concerns. She has now reached out to AFA for help.

*“It is a complete violation of privacy,” said Deb. “I have 140-odd pages of my record and it describes me as a child. It goes right through my 14 years as a ward of the state and it talks about everything. While Forgotten Australians should have more control over what gets published, records should be exempt from a digital platform for easy access.”*



An example of Deb's own records, full of redactions

Although the 99 year rule is in place to prevent records being publicly available during a care leaver's lifetime, it does not prevent their children, relatives or indeed anyone else from accessing those records after the time period [99 years] has elapsed.

“I'm sure that if Forgotten Australians knew about this there'd be an outrage,” said Deb.

“There's nothing stopping any researcher or student using any of the content in our records without our consent. It opens a real Pandora's box and shows no respect or dignity to us as children.”



Image courtesy of Deb Findlay – no one else's business

## AFA's response

Following Deb's appeal to AFA, a campaign is being rolled out to rectify this oversight. Involving advocacy to maximise pressure on the government, it will ultimately seek a change to the Public Records Act 1973, so that records created in connection with children who were wards of the state or otherwise in out-of-home care are designated **permanently sensitive**. To uphold privacy, dignity and trauma-informed practice, these records are not opened to general public access at any time.

Many Forgotten Australians carry childhood traumas into adulthood and the fear that their records may be misused in the future carries the risk of reopening past wounds.

Care-leaver records include highly personal narratives, abuse allegations, medical and family details, public release risks re-traumatisation and reputational harm to Forgotten Australians/ Care Leavers and their families. Having these records publicly available even after 99 years is morally wrong and deeply disrespectful to Forgotten Australians/Care Leavers and their families.

The Alliance is working with Deb to set up a parliamentary e-petition, which will be established after the Victorian election in November. Our aim is to get over 10,000 signatures so the matter can be debated in the lower house.

## YOUR RECORDS – AN OVERVIEW

Care leavers in Australia have the legal right to access all personal and identifying records from their time in care. The process is free and you can request your wardship history, case notes and placement details through state-based departments or the Find and Connect Support Services.

## HOW TO ACCESS YOUR RECORDS

Depending on where you were in care, you will need to submit an application to the relevant state department:

### VICTORIA

Call **1300 151 883**

Email [clrs@dffh.vic.gov.au](mailto:clrs@dffh.vic.gov.au)

Visit **Care Leaver Records Service (CLRS)**

You can also apply online: **Guide to Accessing Victorian Care Leaver and adoption Records.**

### NEW SOUTH WALES

Applications are managed by the **Care Leaver Records** within the Department of Communities and Justice.

### OTHER STATES

Visit **Find & Connect Child Welfare Records Guide** to locate the specific Freedom of Information (FOI) or records unit for your jurisdiction.



# AFA Forum 2026 – a report on challenges ahead and progress made

**Members of the Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA) came together in Melbourne on Tuesday, 28 April 2026, for the first forum of the year. The gathering provided an important opportunity to share updates across states and focus on key issues affecting Forgotten Australians nationwide.**

## KEY THEMES EMERGING

From state discussions and member insights, several critical themes were identified. These included the ongoing health and ageing needs of Forgotten Australians, rising cost-of-living pressures and persistent concerns regarding access to records. These issues continue to shape the advocacy priorities of the Alliance.

## FOCUS AREAS FOR THE FORUM

The forum concentrated on five major areas:

- The future of AFA beyond 2028
- National Redress Scheme (NRS) evaluation and closure
- Records and redaction challenges
- Victorian wardship records
- Aged care advocacy

## LOOKING BEYOND 2028

The Alliance is currently working with members to develop a paper for the Department of Social Services, outlining a future service model for Forgotten Australians after Find and Connect funding concludes in June 2028.

While the Australian Government has yet to confirm future funding arrangements, AFA believes it is essential to establish a stronger and forward-looking program now. This planning includes addressing gaps in representation, particularly for younger care leavers who exited the system after the 1990s and remain underrepresented in advocacy efforts.

The Alliance is also exploring the need for a national peak body to better support and amplify the voices of these younger care leavers.

## NATIONAL REDRESS SCHEME: PROGRESS AND CONCERNS

With the National Redress Scheme due to end on 30 June 2028, the Alliance is committed to ensuring that the voices of Forgotten Australians are heard in ongoing evaluations and inquiries.

Key advocacy priorities include:

- Faster processing times and clear performance targets
- Improved communication and survivor-centred practices
- Expanded counselling services to address the impact of delays
- Extending the Scheme beyond 2028
- Clear pathways for unresolved cases after closure

Although the Scheme has delivered important recognition, compensation and access to support services, significant gaps remain. Many survivors continue to experience exclusion, inequity, and administrative barriers, alongside concerns about missing out before the Scheme ends.



Diane, Suzanne and Sharon

## RECORDS ACCESS: ONGOING CHALLENGES

Access to personal records remains one of the most pressing issues raised at the forum. Many Forgotten Australians continue to face emotional distress when accessing records due to redactions, delays, missing information, and inconsistent practices.

Despite the development of the National Framework for Recordkeeping for Childhood Out-of-Home Care in 2017, implementation has been inconsistent and challenges persist across jurisdictions. The Alliance remains committed to advocating for improved standards and accountability in this space.

## PROTECTING VICTORIAN WARDSHIP RECORDS

A significant concern raised relates to the future accessibility of Victorian wardship records. It was noted that these records may become publicly available after 99 years through the Public Records Office of Victoria.

The Alliance is supporting advocacy efforts to designate these records as “Permanently Sensitive,” ensuring lifelong protection of privacy and dignity for those who were in care. Work is underway to raise this issue with the Victorian Government.



Sharyn, Dave and Daryl

## SUPPORTING AGEING FORGOTTEN AUSTRALIANS

Forgotten Australians are an ageing and vulnerable population, often experiencing poor health, social isolation and economic hardship. Many face challenges navigating a complex aged care system that relies heavily on self-management and digital access.

*Fear and mistrust of institutional care remain significant barriers, often rooted in past trauma.*

To address these challenges, the Alliance is focusing on:

- Raising awareness within the aged care sector
- Promoting trauma-informed care models that avoid re-institutionalisation
- Strengthening support for ageing at home
- Expanding funding for Care Finder services
- Building a stronger evidence base to inform policy and services

The forum concluded with a preview of an Aged Care Education booklet currently in development. This resource will soon be shared widely to help Forgotten Australians better understand and navigate the aged care system.



# AFA Forum 2026 – a report on challenges ahead and progress made

**While the AFA continues to campaign for subsidised and better dental care access for Forgotten Australians, it is vital that people are aware of who to contact for support around this issue. Find & Connect services can and will help you access dental care and advocate on your behalf.**

For example, Open Place in Melbourne receives annual funding from the Victorian Government to support Forgotten Australians in meeting costs related to their health needs. This includes dentistry. They can also help Forgotten Australians navigate mainstream and specialist health services and, where possible, negotiate with health providers to maximise benefits.

Meanwhile, in Brisbane, Micah Projects' Inclusive Health and Wellness Hub is designed to give everyone a 'fair go' in the healthcare system to break the cycles of health inequality. Services include GP, dental, wellness and pop-up vaccination and health tests.

Forgotten Australians experience higher rates of poor dental health, which increases their risk of chronic health conditions and underscores the urgent need for targeted action.



## IMPACT ON FORGOTTEN AUSTRALIANS

Dental issues have a severe impact on diet, speech and confidence for thousands of Forgotten Australians. They are forced to wait months, if not years, for what is classified as 'non-urgent' public dental care. A significant causal relationship has been established between chronic health conditions, such as diabetes, and suboptimal dental health.

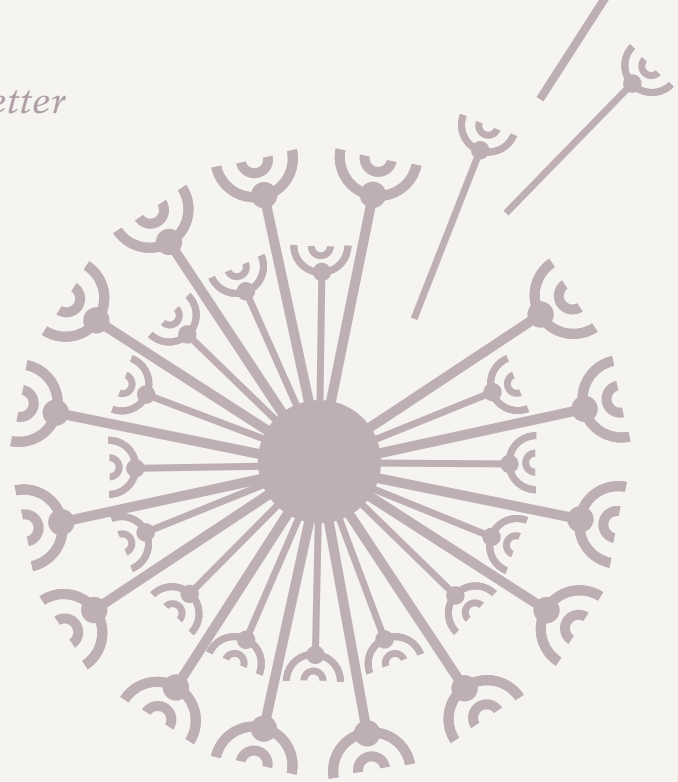
## DENTAL CARE SHOULD BE ADDED TO MEDICARE

Policy experts and dentists agree that dental services should be added to Medicare in stages to manage cost pressures. The Australian Dental Association suggests a means-tested scheme, with a capped amount available to every individual every couple of years. Some children are already eligible for free or low-cost dental through Medicare, and Forgotten Australians should be eligible as well.

## HOW CAN YOU ADVOCATE FOR BETTER DENTAL CARE?

AFA is asking Forgotten Australians / Care Leavers to add your voice to this campaign by:

- Emailing or writing to your local MP and demand dental care under Medicare
- You can find details about your MP at [aph.gov.au/Senators\\_and\\_Members](http://aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members)
- Use **this template letter** or write your own letter.
- If you need help with printing, writing or posting the letter, ask your local Find & Connect service for help.
- Flyers about the campaign are available at Find & Connect services:  
Call **1800 16 11 09**  
or visit [findandconnect.gov.au](http://findandconnect.gov.au)



# Responses to DP vs Bird vicarious liability fallout

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**The respective governments of the ACT and Victoria are leading the way in responding to the contentious High Court decision of DP vs Bird in November 2024.**

Legislation reversing a High Court decision to allow historic victim-survivors to sue religious institutions – such as the Catholic Church – for the actions of priests and staff was applauded when it passed Victoria's upper house in February 2026.

This legal victory represents a massive shift in how organisations are held responsible for historic abuses. The newly passed laws adjust vicarious liability, fundamentally expanding it so that groups can be held legally responsible for the wrongful acts committed by their agents or employees, even in historical cases that had previously been settled under the former High Court ruling. These reforms allow survivors to seek justice and compensation directly from the organisations.

It follows on the heels of the ACT in October 2025 becoming the first jurisdiction in Australia to pass legislation expanding the liability of churches, sporting groups and other organisations to include the actions of paedophiles.

## CORE LEGAL PRINCIPLES OF VICARIOUS LIABILITY

- **STRICT LIABILITY**  
The employer does not need to be at fault; liability is automatically imputed if the employment relationship and scope of duties are established.
- **JOINT AND SEVERAL LIABILITY**  
Both the employee (the wrongdoer) and the employer are liable. A victim can choose to sue either or both; typically the employer carries the financial burden.
- **COURSE OF EMPLOYMENT**  
The wrongful act must have a close connection to what the employee was actually employed to do. Acts that are completely independent or personal in nature generally fall outside this scope.

JURISDICTION	STATUS OF LEGISLATIVE INTERVENTION
ACT	<p>The ACT was the first jurisdiction to pass new legislation to address Bird v DP. The <b>Civil Law (Wrongs) (Organisational Child Abuse Liability) Amendment Bill 2025 (ACT)</b> passed on 30 October 2025.</p>
VICTORIA	<p>In November 2025, the government introduced the <b>Justice Legislation Amendment (Vicarious Liability for Child Abuse) Bill 2025 (Vic)</b>. It sought to make an institution vicariously liable for abuse of a child by an individual who is akin to an employee in certain circumstances. It passed into legislation in February 2026.</p>
NEW SOUTH WALES	<p>The NSW Government introduced the <i>Civil Liability Amendment (Organisational Child Abuse Liability) Bill 2025 (NSW)</i>. The Bill was negated on its second reading. No further bills have yet been introduced as a consequence of Bird v DP.</p>
SOUTH AUSTRALIA	<p>The South Australian government is yet to introduce any new legislation to address the implications of Bird v DP.</p>
WESTERN AUSTRALIA	<p>In November 2025, the government introduced the <b>Civil Liability Amendment (Child Sexual Abuse Actions) Bill 2025 (WA)</b>. It seeks to address the implications of Bird v DP by creating a deemed employment relationship between a religious practitioner and religious institution (for the purposes of vicarious liability). It remains before parliament.</p>
QUEENSLAND / NORTHERN TERRITORY	<p>To date, there has been no proposed legislation or acknowledgment of the High Court decision from the Queensland or Northern Territory governments.</p>



## AFA board attends National Aged & Community Care roundtable for Forgotten Australians

### **A New Era in Ageing for Forgotten Australians' was the theme of a robust and successful forum hosted by the National Aged and Community Care Roundtable for Forgotten Australians.**

The annual forum shines a spotlight on the critical issues for older Forgotten Australians in the provision of appropriate, higher quality, trauma responsive care and support.

The Forum began with insightful opening addresses by the Inspector General of Aged Care, Natalie Siegal Brown, and Commissioner Robert Fitzgerald AM. Both presented as strong advocates for better care and support for older Forgotten Australians.

Questions from attendees were plentiful and the responses challenged us to not only be critical but also helpful about what can be improved. A key message? Always go to government with a solution that accompanies the identification of a problem.

The forum featured several panels and presentations, including one with AFA's Maree Holt, with the panel discussing how research is shaping community services today.

AFA Chair Suzanne Burke set the scene for the interactive session on the strategic roadmap and priority issues for Forgotten Australians. Below are excerpts from her speech:

*For Forgotten Australians, aged care is not simply a service system. It is a reminder of the past. It triggers memories of places where we were not safe, where we were powerless, and where our voices did not matter. Our goal must be simple and clear: to ensure aged care services are appropriate, sensitive, safe, and trauma-informed for Forgotten Australians.*

Suzanne went on to further state:

*So, what must change? First, we need increased awareness across the aged care sector about the specific needs of Forgotten Australians. Secondly, we must invest in specialised residential and community-based care models — environments that are affordable, trauma-informed, and designed to avoid re-institutionalisation.*

*Models like Wintringham show what is possible: integrated housing and care that prioritises safety, dignity, and trust, and steps into the role of "family" where family support does not exist.*

*Third, we need to enhance aged care services delivered at home, allowing people to age in place for as long as possible, with strong safeguarding practices. Fourth, targeted funding is essential — particularly for Care Finder services — so that support reaches those who are least able to navigate the system on their own.*

*Finally, we must strengthen the evidence base through a national census campaign, ensuring future planning is informed by real data about the size, location, and needs of Forgotten Australians.*

*In closing, Forgotten Australians were not protected as children. We now have a responsibility — the alliance, peaks, policymakers, providers, and community leaders — to ensure they are protected as they age. We deserve care that does not retraumatise us. We deserve safety, dignity, and respect. And above all, we deserve not to be forgotten again.*

The forum concluded with Forgotten Australians sharing their hopes for a better aged care system.

The following day, Open Place hosted a morning tea for the **International Day of Care Experience History Month**, which recognises people around the world who experienced, or are currently experiencing, institutional or out-of-home care as children. Several Alliance members attended.



The forum featured several panels and presentations, including one with AFA's Maree Holt.

# Aged care trauma awareness and education – update on survey findings



**Relationships Australia SA in April invited Forgotten Australians to take part in a survey to better understand what helps them feel safe, respected and supported when receiving aged care services. Survey participants included people who have lived experience of out-of-home care, institutional care, or similar settings, or may receive aged care services now or in the future.**

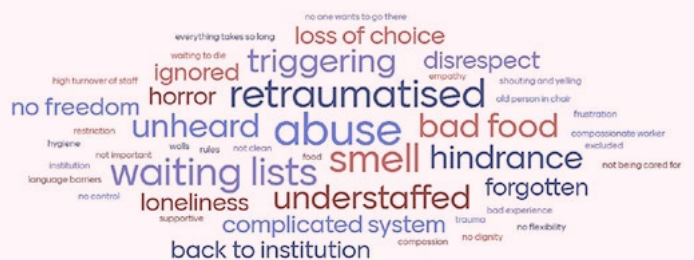
The survey is part of the three-year National Aged Care Trauma Awareness Project, funded by the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.

The project has two main goals:

- develop training for the aged care workforce, to strengthen their understanding and skills to deliver trauma-aware care and support Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers
- increase knowledge and raise awareness across the sector

Some 176 people responded – combining both lived expertise groups and aged care groups – with most coming from South Australia, New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia.

Data analysis is now underway, but we can reveal that one survey question – what words, images or ideas come to mind when you think about aged care – triggered responses that are seen below. It speaks to a deeper fear and worry toward the system:



Project staff will now draw together everything from the consultations and surveys to identify key themes and build training materials. Secondly, an advisory group will be formed. This is a group of 10 people – comprised of Forgotten Australians, providers, educators and advocates – who will guide the next phase of the project.

Any questions about the project can be directed to [agedcareawareness@rasa.org.au](mailto:agedcareawareness@rasa.org.au)

# My aged care's guide for the needs of ageing Forgotten Australians

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Care leavers encompass different groups of people who, as children, were removed from their families and communities and placed in out of home care. In the last century, over 500,000 people spent their childhoods in institutional and out-of-home 'care' in Australia.

## CAN I GET AGED CARE THAT CATERS FOR MY NEEDS?

You have the right to receive safe, high-quality care and services and to be treated with dignity and respect. Government-funded care should value your identity, culture, background and life experiences.

You can access government-funded aged care services if you have assessed care needs and are at least one of the following:

- aged 65 years and over
- an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person aged 50 years and older
- homeless or at risk of homelessness and aged 50 years and older
- already living in an aged care home or accessing aged care services.

Some providers tailor their practices and staff to meet the needs of specific groups. This includes older people who are care leavers, Forgotten Australians or former child migrants.

## HOW DO I FIND A PROVIDER THAT IS RIGHT FOR ME?

Whether you're looking for help at home or considering moving into an aged care home, My Aged Care can help you find and access a range of **aged care services**. Eligibility for government-funded aged care services is based on your age, needs and situation.

The first step is to **apply for an assessment**.

Applications can be done:

- online
- over the phone
- or in person.

## WHAT QUESTIONS CAN I ASK AGED CARE PROVIDERS?

When you're starting to think about aged care or are talking to a provider for the first time, it's good to think about the kind of care you would like. You can start by asking:

- How do they recognise and support past trauma?
- What do they know about Forgotten Australians?
- Will staff know my story, so there's no need to tell it again?
- How will my needs be part of my care plan?





## WHO CAN HELP ME ACCESS AGED CARE?

There are many ways to get some help to access aged care, if you want it. This includes speaking to someone who understands your background and experiences. There is a network of free services available that can provide advice and support at every step along the way:

### Care finders

The care finder service provides face-to-face support to help vulnerable older people with complex needs who need intensive support to navigate and access aged care. A care finder can visit you, usually at your home, to help you to work through the steps needed to address your needs.

### Services Australia

They can provide general information about aged care and help you use the My Aged Care website. If you need more in person help, you can book an appointment with an Aged Care Specialist Officer. They can provide more detailed information and help with key steps.

### Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN)

OPAN provides free and confidential support for older people receiving government-funded aged care. They provide advocacy services to help you receive better aged care.

## WHAT IF I HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT MY CARE?

If you feel unsafe or uncomfortable, are denied a service, or have a concern about your rights, you should tell someone.

This could be your aged care provider, a staff member, a friend, family member, an aged care advocate, or anyone you trust.

Learn more about **your rights**.



## MY AGED CARE CONTACT DETAILS

Call 1800 200 422

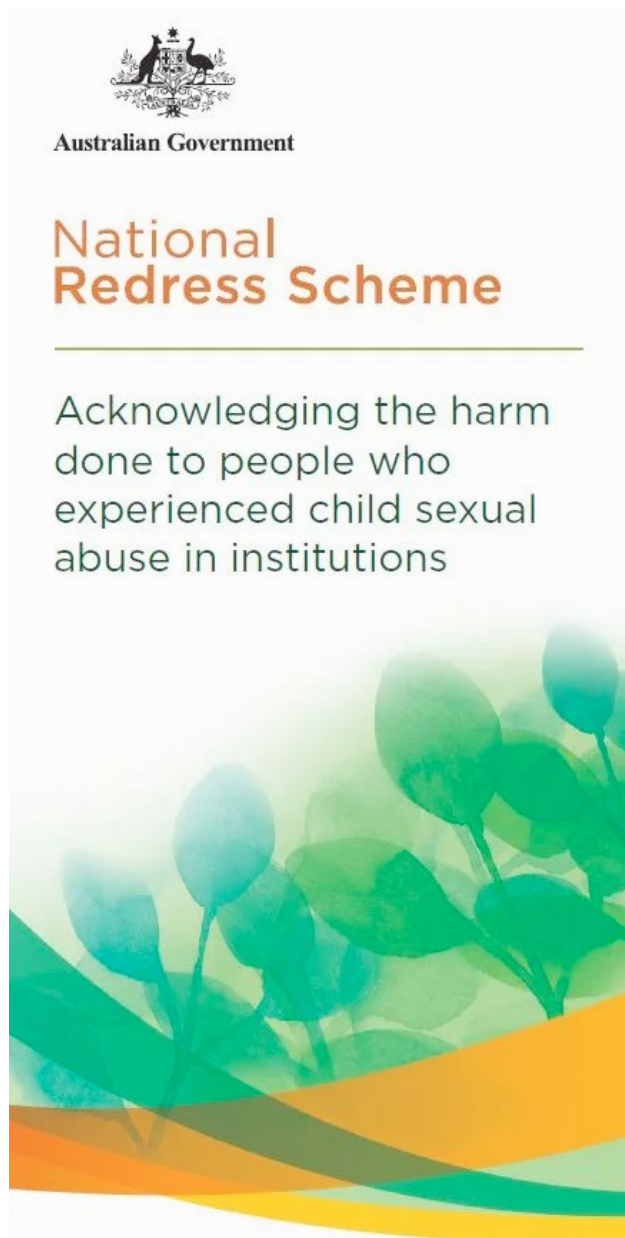
Monday to Friday  
8am-8pm

Saturday  
10am-2pm

# Inquiry into the continuing operations of the National Redress Scheme – submission by AFA

**The Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA) has used its submission to the parliamentary inquiry into the National Redress Scheme to deliver a stark warning: without urgent reform, thousands of survivors of institutional child abuse risk being left behind.**

The Alliance argues that the Scheme has delivered important recognition for some survivors while also causing significant distress and retraumatisation for many others.



## AFA HAS CONTINUOUSLY CAMPAIGNED FOR A NATIONAL REDRESS SYSTEM

Although members were divided about supporting a scheme limited to survivors of sexual abuse, many agreed it was an important first step and hoped it would expand over time. While some Forgotten Australians have found healing through payments and direct personal responses, the Alliance says the Scheme still falls far short of survivor expectations.

A key concern is the Scheme's scheduled closure in 2028. The Alliance warns that:

- long delays already plague the process
- some applicants are waiting years for outcomes
- survivors report frustration, despair and a growing belief that governments are simply waiting for elderly applicants to die before claims are resolved



## THE NEED TO EXTEND THE SCHEME

The AFA fears a rush of last-minute processing could create inconsistent decisions and confusion about unresolved cases.

As a result, the submission strongly supports extending the Scheme for at least another two to three years. Reasons include:

- delays caused by COVID-19
- slow uptake by institutions
- ongoing high demand
- poor awareness of the Scheme across many communities

The Alliance also points to serious accessibility barriers for older Australians, particularly those in remote areas or those with limited literacy, disability or digital skills.

## COMPLEXITIES OF NAVIGATING THE SCHEME

The submission paints a troubling picture of the emotional toll involved in applying for redress. Survivors are often required to revisit traumatic memories while navigating complex paperwork and long periods of silence from administrators. Many applicants describe feeling disbelieved, emotionally exhausted and overwhelmed by the process.

The Alliance stresses that redress is not merely administrative work but a deeply traumatic experience requiring specialist, trauma-informed support. Support services remain under pressure:

- Find & Connect providers are facing rising demand and growing waitlists
- funding for the Find & Connect program is due to end in June 2028
- funding for the National Redress Scheme itself is also due to end at this time

The Alliance warns this would remove vital counselling, peer support, records access and family reconnection services for a highly vulnerable ageing population.

## LIMITED ELIGIBILITY

The submission also highlights the Scheme's limited eligibility criteria as a major reason many Forgotten Australians choose not to apply. Survivors whose experiences centred on physical abuse, emotional abuse or neglect often feel excluded and invalidated because the Scheme focuses primarily on sexual abuse. Others avoid applying due to fears of rejection, missing records or lifelong mistrust of authorities.

Compounding these issues is poor public awareness. Despite the scale of the Forgotten Australians population, only a small proportion have applied for redress. The Alliance argues that government promotion of the Scheme has been inadequate and says many survivors remain unaware that support services even exist.

## AFA CALLS FOR A FAIRER REDRESS SYSTEM

Ultimately, the Alliance is calling for a redress system that is broader, fairer and more humane. It wants continued access to counselling, stronger outreach services, clearer communication and expanded eligibility that recognises all forms of institutional abuse and neglect. Above all, the submission argues that justice for Forgotten Australians cannot operate on rigid deadlines when trauma, shame and delayed disclosure often last a lifetime.



# Consult with the Victorian Public Tenants Association (VPTA) at Open Place

A member of the Victorian Public Tenants Association (VPTA) attends Open Place the first Thursday of every month to provide support and advice to those living in public housing.

**No appointment is necessary – simply drop in.**

**WHERE**

1/8 Bromham Place, Richmond

**WHEN**

First Thursday of every month

**TIME**

11.00 am to 12.30 pm



**The VPTA is the peak body for public housing in Victoria. They represent people living in public housing and those on the Victorian Housing Register (waiting list). They offer free, confidential counselling and advice, referrals and information, as well as representation and advocacy. Their goal is to give voice to tenants and work towards improving and expanding the public housing system in Victoria.**

For those who cannot physically attend Open Place, the VPTA provides a free telephone advice service from Monday – Friday, 9 am to 5 pm (excluding public holidays).

For more information, contact Open Place **1800 779 379**.

**The VPTA offers help with:**

- Communicating with your local Housing Office
- Assistance with maintenance requests
- Understanding letters and forms from the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
- Understanding your rights and responsibilities as a renter, and those the Department has
- Understanding Departmental policies and procedures
- Advice about rent calculations, rebates and arrears
- Advice about neighbourhood disputes
- Referrals to other services (where they cannot assist)
- Advice about applications for housing

The VPTA does not provide legal advice.



ALLIANCE FOR THE  
FORGOTTEN AUSTRALIANS

## **VOICE** *Newsletter*

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Alliance for Forgotten Australians  
Email: [admin@forgottenaustralians.org.au](mailto:admin@forgottenaustralians.org.au)  
Website: [forgottenaustralians.org.au](http://forgottenaustralians.org.au)

*Still unfinished business, still fighting for justice.*



Australian Government  
Department of Social Services