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Media Release

Forgotten Australians face uncertain future as key support deadlines loom

Australia risks failing a generation of Forgotten Australians once again as survivors of historical institutional abuse grow older and key national support programs approach critical deadlines, according to Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA) Chair Suzanne Burke

“Urgent government action is needed to address ongoing gaps in aged care, health, housing and specialist support. Many Forgotten Australians have spent their lives waiting for meaningful change, and as they grow older, time is running out,” Ms Burke said.

The warning follows the ***From Forgotten to Remembered Parliamentary Roundtable*** in Canberra on Monday (26 October), which brought together Forgotten Australians, Ministers and government representatives to discuss practical solutions to the lifelong impacts of institutional care and the reforms still needed.

The discussions come as the Federal Government considers new parliamentary recommendations to extend and reform the National Redress Scheme, with growing attention on how Australia will meet its long-term responsibilities to survivors of institutional abuse.

“This week’s discussions were an important opportunity for Forgotten Australians to speak directly with the government about what needs to change. We welcome that engagement, but it must be followed by meaningful action,” Ms Burke said.

Minister Tanya Plibersek addressed the roundtable and heard directly from Forgotten Australians about their experiences and ongoing needs. During her remarks, she also referred to the Joint Standing Committee's recent report on the National Redress Scheme and its recommendations.

Released on 14 October, the Committee's report, ***Their Courage, Our Responsibility***, made 31 recommendations, including extending the National Redress Scheme's application deadline from 30 June to 31 December 2027 and keeping the Scheme open until all applications have been processed.

AFA is seeking to build on the roundtable through continued discussions with Commonwealth, state and territory governments, with a focus on translating the priorities raised into practical policy responses.

These include reforming the National Redress Scheme, securing ongoing access to specialist services such as Find & Connect, improving trauma-informed health, housing and aged care support, and strengthening national recognition of Forgotten Australians' experiences.

An estimated 500,000 Australians experienced institutional or other out-of-home care as children and young people during the last century, many of whom experienced abuse, neglect and trauma.

More than two decades after the landmark 2004 Senate Inquiry brought their experiences to national attention, AFA says the ongoing consequences of institutional care require a sustained, coordinated response across government.

“For many Forgotten Australians, entering aged care or relying on institutional services can be particularly distressing because of the trauma they experienced as children,” Ms Burke said.

“Services need to understand these experiences and provide care that is safe, respectful and appropriate. Without that understanding, people risk being retraumatised by the very systems intended to support them.”

Ms Burke said the roundtable provided an important foundation for further engagement, but stressed that progress must be measured by the changes delivered.

“We appreciate the willingness of government representatives to listen and engage with Forgotten Australians. We now want to build on that dialogue, identify clear priorities and work towards practical solutions that improve people's lives,” she said.

“Forgotten Australians deserve more than acknowledgement. They deserve the security of knowing that the support they need will be there, now and into the future.”

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About AFA
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.

The Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA), formed in 2006, is an organisation which promotes the interests of the estimated 500,000 people known as Forgotten

Australians, who experienced institutional or other out-of-home care as children and young people in the last century in Australia, many of whom suffered physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse while in ‘care’.

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