ALLIANCE FOR
FORGOTTEN
AUSTRALIANS

2025-2026 ANNUAL REPORT



THE ALLIANCE FOR FORGOTTEN AUSTRALIANS

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 an estimated 500,000 Australians who spent a period of time as a child in a children's home, orphanage, asylum, foster placement, training school or any other form of residential out-of-home facility in Australia before the end of 1989.

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-centred and strengths-based, and which create opportunities and pathways to improve the lives of Forgotten Australians.

MISSION

AFA's mission is to support Forgotten Australians to amplify their collective voice and ensure active participation nationally, drawing on lived experience by:

(a) **Advocating** for appropriate past, present and future policies, programs and services that impact the lives of Forgotten Australians and children in the system since 1989;

(b) **Educating** elected representatives, policy makers, professionals, academics and the general community on the lived experience, past and present, of Forgotten Australians; and

(c) **Promoting** recognition and inclusion of the past experiences, injustices and impact of the legislation, policies and practices on the lives of Forgotten Australians as children and adults.



AFA BOARD

Suzanne Burke (Chair)



Daryl Higgins (Deputy Chair)



Diane Carpenter



Reg Casley (Treasurer)



David Henderson (retiring Nov 2026)



Maree Holt



Heather May (resigned October 2026)



Jan Schaffarz (resigned April 2026)



Karyn Walsh (retiring Nov 2026)



CHAIR'S REPORT



I am delighted to present this year's Annual Report.

The AFA Board's commitment to representing the lived experience of out-of-home institutional care remains as strong as ever. Too often, these voices have been overlooked, and we will not waiver in standing up and advocating for all Forgotten Australians.

It has been a significant 12 months.

We have made real headway in our advocacy, seen key progress on memorials – with Canberra's National Memorial now under construction as this report goes to print – and strengthened our connections with affiliate members and Forgotten Australians right across the states and territories.

To keep this momentum going, the Board met online throughout the year and caught up in person twice: first in Darwin in September 2025, and then in Melbourne in April 2026.

As you will see in the pages ahead, a great deal of our energy went into our advocacy strategy and ongoing campaigns. With more Forgotten Australians entering aged care, many of these issues are becoming genuinely urgent. There is still considerable ground to cover with government and aged care providers to guarantee rights are protected and services genuinely meet individual needs. To make sure our community's voice is heard at the table, AFA took an active role across key forums, including:

- The National Aged and Community Care Roundtable
- The Older Persons Advocacy Network

On a personal note, I want to thank our Board members and affiliates for everything they have brought to the table this year. On behalf of the entire organisation, warm thanks also go to Cathy Humphrey, our Executive Officer, and Reg Casley, our Treasurer, for their steady guidance, insights and hard work.

Finally, we have some bittersweet farewells to share.

We extend our deep gratitude to Karyn Walsh from Micah Projects in Queensland; her outstanding dedication over many years has helped shape our path. We also recognise David Henderson for a decade of remarkable service and advocacy for his beloved Tasmania. Our sincere thanks go to Jan Schaffarz in South Australia for years of tireless championing of aged care outcomes, and to Heather May for consistently sharing the Northern Territory perspective to deliver better results.

People like this have devoted themselves to ensuring the voices of Forgotten Australians are heard far and wide, and that they will never be forgotten.

SUZANNE BURKE

SEPTEMBER 2025 FORUM (DARWIN)

Members and delegates gathered in Darwin for AFA's first forum of the 2025-26 financial year. AFA was warmly welcomed by Northern Territory's AFA Board member, Heather May, and the NT team from Relationships Australia. The team thanked AFA for coming to Darwin, and seeking to strengthen the relationship between AFA and Forgotten Australians from the NT. Then it was down to business, which included discussions on the following issues:



State updates and funding concerns
State delegates highlighted persistent barriers to accessing redacted records, obtaining identity documents and managing long waiting lists. While additional DSS funding granted in June 2025 helped reduce backlogs, serious concerns were raised over funding uncertainty once the grant ceases in June 2026. A government decision was expected by December (good news came in November, with the Australian Government announcing a two-year extension for Find & Connect).

Aged care advocacy
To address survivors' fears of re-institutionalisation, abuse and neglect, AFA prioritised specialised in-home support, dedicated community settings, system navigators and sector education. AFA is collaborating with Wintringham, supporting the National Aged & Community Care Roundtable and engaging with Relationships Australia SA, which secured a national tender to deliver trauma-informed aged care training. An official Acknowledgment of Forgotten Australians was also adopted.

Projects and community engagement
Key communications initiatives include website updates, revising the 'Purple Book' and depositing 40 life stories with the State Library of Victoria ahead of a 2026 launch. Over morning tea with Northern Territory survivors, delegates heard urgent concerns regarding homelessness and limited remote healthcare, such as absent dialysis facilities requiring travel to Darwin.

Dental health, housing and ongoing support
AFA outlined key policy targets across vital service areas: dental care – advocating for federal responsibility, targeted treatments, reduced public waitlists and Medicare-funded dental care, alongside backing a Senior Dental Benefit Scheme; housing – addressing severe shortages and homelessness through improved data collection and lobbying parliamentarians to prioritise Forgotten Australians; and lifetime services – exploring a dedicated Remembrance Week in April 2026 and establishing holistic, lifetime support that addresses ongoing physical health, mental health and intergenerational trauma.

Summary
This important dialogue will continue at future forums to help AFA define its advocacy position on getting better access to health and mental health services for Forgotten Australians.

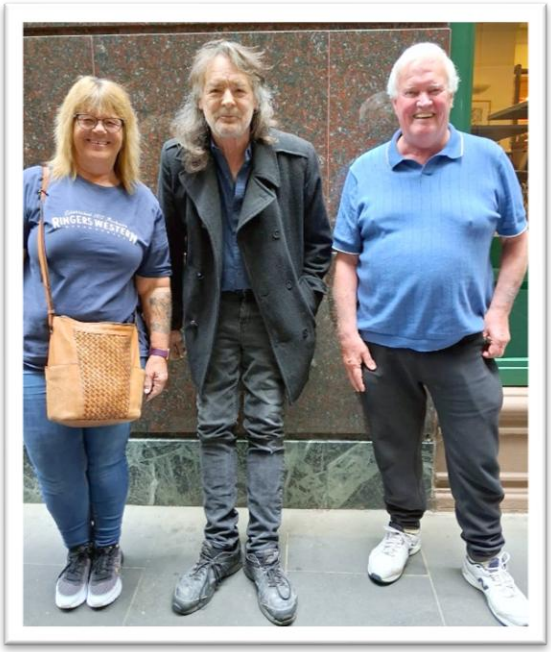
APRIL 2026 FORUM (MELBOURNE)

The next AFA forum was in Melbourne. 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



Sharyn, Dave and Daryl at the Melbourne forum

Looking beyond 2028
AFA is working with members to develop a paper for the DSS outlining a future service model for Forgotten Australians after Find & 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.

AFA 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 NRS due to end in 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 NRS beyond 2028
- Clear pathways for unresolved cases after closure

Although the NRS 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.

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.

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, AFA 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

2025/26 ADVOCACY

The Alliance is actively engaged in advocacy to raise awareness and drive changes for Forgotten Australians. In 2025/26, AFA participated in a range of activities, including:

- Attending the National Aged and Community Care Roundtable for Forgotten Australians
- Attended the Melbourne Forum – *A New Era in Aged Care for Forgotten Australians/Care Leavers*. AFA also provided sponsorship to support the attendance of Forgotten Australians.
- Attended National Memorial Advisory Group meetings
- Distributed the AFA Forgotten Australian identity card
- Attended the Older Persons Advocacy Network
- Project with Wintringham to enhance access to aged care services for Forgotten Australians
- Launched the new AFA website in July 2025
- Held two forums with members in Darwin and Melbourne
- Produced three editions of the *AFA Voice* newsletter
- Commenced working with Helping Hand to support aged care organisations applying for care leavers specialisation verification
- Released the sixth edition of the 'Purple Book' – *Supporting victim / survivors of institutional and out of home care* – following a review and edit
- Launched its newest publication to support Forgotten Australians in July 2026, *Getting started with aged care – a practical guide for Forgotten Australians / Care Leavers*
- Collaborated with the Find & Connect providers and Forgotten Australians to design a strengthened and forward-looking model for the Find & Connect Program beyond June 2028
- Responded to an approach from a Forgotten Australian in Victoria regarding legislation that allows state ward records to become publicly available on the Public Records Office website after 99 years. AFA commenced advocacy efforts to seek a change in the Act, 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.
- Submission to the parliamentary inquiry into the National Redress Scheme
- *Better Dental Care* campaign launched with many Forgotten Australians writing to local MPs
- Met with MPs and Department of Social Services representatives in Canberra

ADVOCACY STRATEGY 2024 – 2028

AFA has ten priority areas to focus its advocacy efforts over the coming years:

1. To lobby DSS to increase funding for AFA, to support AFA's capacity for advocacy and related projects.

2. To ensure DSS continues to provide funding to AFA and the Find & Connect Services beyond June 2028.

3. To advocate for the prioritisation of Forgotten Australians in the allocation of social and community housing in each state and territory.

4. To lobby government to fund better dental care for Forgotten Australians.

5. To increase the awareness of the needs of Forgotten Australians with community and residential aged care providers and support the development of a specialised residential setting for disadvantaged ageing Forgotten Australians.

6. To explore the development of a National Remembrance Week for Forgotten Australians.

7. To lobby for a State Redress Scheme in New South Wales.

8. To continue to increase awareness of the needs of Forgotten Australians to health professionals (GPs, dentists, psychiatrists).

9. To work with the tertiary education system to ensure the history, experiences and impacts on Forgotten Australians are integrated into tertiary education for the helping professions.

10. To ensure that DSS continues its commitment to the Find and Connect Roundtable.

OUR PROGRESS ON AFA'S ADVOCACY STRATEGY

Funding for the Alliance and Find and Connect Services

As advocated by AFA and its supporters, ongoing funding of the Find & Connect Services is vital to the continued needs of victim/survivors affected by their time in institutional care. These efforts were successful; in November 2025 the Australian Government announced a two-year extension. It will ensure 11 existing providers continue to deliver vital services until June 2028; now our advocacy efforts focus on the continuing funding of these services beyond this date.

To help inform the Department of Social Services, a submission was developed in collaboration with Find & Connect and Forgotten Australians to design a strengthened and forward-looking model for the program beyond June 2028. The paper was provided to the department in June.

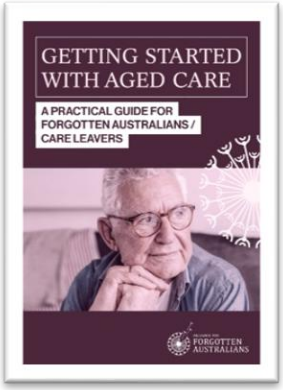
Increase the awareness of the needs of Forgotten Australians with community and residential aged care providers and support the development of a specialised residential setting for disadvantaged ageing Forgotten Australians.



Wintringham Project
The Alliance's project with Wintringham continues with virtual training in residential care. A banner is being displayed in the staff lunchrooms, accompanied by a link to information to learn more.

Following the success of the face-to-face education sessions, plans are underway to add the program to the orientation session with new staff.

Aged Care education booklet
The Alliance launched a new publication to support Forgotten Australians in July 2026: *Getting Started With Aged Care – a practical guide for Forgotten Australians / Care Leavers.* It provides information to Forgotten Australians on how the aged care system can support their needs as they age.



In addition, the booklet raises awareness regarding Forgotten Australians' exposure to elder abuse and how to seek supports. The publication is being distributed via the Find & Connect Services in each state and can also be downloaded from the AFA website.

Helping Hands project
Helping Hand chairs a national Community of Practice of aged care organisations within the UnitingCare Australia network. These are organisations working to embed trauma aware care and to apply for the care leaver Specialisation Verification. Helping Hands contacted AFA in early 2026 to ascertain the board's interest in seeking a partnership between AFA and the Community of Practice to support aged care organisations applying for care leavers specialisation verification. AFA has agreed to trial a project in three states: WA, TAS and QLD. Terms of Reference have been developed for the project; its first meeting was held in July 2026.

Older Person Advocacy Network
An AFA representative continues to participate on the Older Persons Advocacy Network and has attended scheduled meetings over the past year.

National Aged and Community Care Roundtable for Forgotten Australians
AFA's Executive Officer participates on the National Aged and Community Care Roundtable for Forgotten Australians meetings during the year. AFA also provided sponsorship to the National Aged & Community Care Roundtable for Forgotten Australians forum - *A New Era in Ageing 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.

It featured several panels and presentations, including one with AFA's Maree Holt, the panel discussed how research is shaping community services today. AFA Chair Suzanne Burke also set the scene for the interactive session on the strategic roadmap and priority issues for Forgotten Australians.

Increase awareness of the needs of Forgotten Australians to health professionals (GPs, dentists, psychiatrists)

Sixth edition of purple book released
A number of guides have been produced since AFA's inception, designed to provide assistance to those supporting 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. 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. The booklet is designed to inform and assist doctors, nurses, mental health professionals, dentists, social workers, counsellors and welfare workers

Lobby government to fund better dental care for Forgotten Australians



AFA's Better Dental Care campaign is mobilising Forgotten Australians to write to local MPs, urging the Australian Government to provide targeted, Medicare-funded dental care. Such dental care for all seniors is long overdue.

High costs cause many ageing Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers to delay essential care, worsening oral health and contributing to broader health problems. Public policy and community support can help deliver change.

Without regular check-ups and timely treatment, minor dental issues can become serious and affect overall wellbeing. Poor childhood dental care has lifelong effects, leaving Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers – many of whom experienced institutional neglect and inadequate medical care – at greater risk of untreated dental disease.

Develop and coordinate a National Remembrance Week for Forgotten Australians

Plans came to fruition with the announcement of an inaugural Remembrance Week from 15 – 23 November 2026. A committee of representatives from each Find & Connect Service planned a series of nationally-coordinated activities across the week.

Lobby for a state redress scheme in New South Wales

The Alliance is working on a campaign to raise the lack of a redress scheme in NSW. The campaign will involve Forgotten Australians writing to their local MPs to elevate the issue ahead of the NSW election in March 2027.

Care Leaver records – advocacy in Victoria

AFA was approached by a Forgotten Australian in Victoria regarding state legislation that allows State Ward records to become publicly available on the Public Records Office Victoria website after 99 years. The Alliance has agreed to support their self-advocacy efforts and seek a change in the Act, 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 should not be open for general public access at any time. Plans are underway to develop an e-petition to the Victorian Parliament following the state election in November 2026.

National Redress Scheme (NRS)

AFA used its submission to the parliamentary inquiry into the NRS to deliver a stark warning – that without urgent reform, thousands of survivors of institutional child abuse risk being left behind. A key concern is the Scheme's scheduled closure in 2028. We warn 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

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.



Our communications

Following the launch of our new website in July 2025, website analytics reported that 5,600 active users accessed the AFA website over the year. Our new *AFA Voice* newsletter was launched in July 2025, with three editions released over the year.

In October 2025, representatives from 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 MPs and their advisers, forging crucial connections that will strengthen AFA's ongoing advocacy efforts.

GOVERNANCE

BOARD (July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026)

Chair	**Suzanne Burke**	**Forgotten Australian WA**	
Deputy Chair	Daryl Higgins	Forgotten Australian NSW	
Treasurer	Reg Casley	Independent member WA	
	Diane Carpenter	Forgotten Australian QLD	
	David Henderson	Forgotten Australian TAS	
	Maree Holt	Forgotten Australian VIC	
	Heather May	Forgotten Australian NT	
	Jan Schaffarz	Forgotten Australian SA	Resigned in April 2026
	Karyn Walsh	Independent member QLD	

At the November 2025 AGM we welcomed Reg Casley, who was appointed as a director for a three-year term. Karyn Walsh and David Henderson, whose terms had expired, were appointed as casual directors and governing members of AFA, until the 2026 AGM, in order to support the recruitment of new members.

AFA also welcomed Sharyn Phillips as an Associate Member from Tasmania, Launceston.

It should be noted and duly acknowledged that all AFA board members are volunteers. They dedicate their time and energy to support the Alliance by drawing on their own lived experience and engaging with other Forgotten Australians in their local communities across Australia.

AFFILIATE MEMBERS

AFA continued its strong relationship with state-based support services for Forgotten Australians, the Find & Connect Services across Australia.

Amelia Hastings	Early Intervention Services TAS
Darcy Orr	Micah Projects QLD
Janalie Nelson	Relationships Australia WA
Luci Lovelock	Elm Place SA (replaced by **Nikki Hartman** in April 2026)
Michelle McDonald	Open Place VIC
Taylah Peters	Adult Specialist Support Services NT
Yvonne Porter	Wattle Place NSW

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Caroline Carroll OAM	Former chair of AFA
Sharyn Phillips	TAS
Jan Schaffarz	Forgotten Australian SA
Luci Lovelock	Independent member SA

BOARD ATTENDANCE

	September 2025	October 2025	AGM November 2025	December 2025	Feb 2026	April 2026	June 2026
David Henderson							
Daryl Higgins							
Suzanne Bourke							
Maree Holt							
Heather May							
Jan Schaffarz[i]							
Karyn Walsh							
Diane Carpenter							
Reg Casley							

Attended ***Apology*** ***Not applicable***

Notes

i. Jan Schaffarz *Resigned April 2026*

TREASURER'S REPORT

I present the financial results for the Alliance for Forgotten Australians to 30 June 2026.

The financial activity for the year reflects the budget approved by the Board including the delivery of several key projects, with a net result for the year, a deficit of ($45,893.33).

This result reflects expenditure on the previous year's underspend, approved by Department of Social Services, and was spent on the following initiatives:

- Training for the AFA Board members
- Development and printing of the Aged Care brochure
- Printing of the revised AFA Purple Book
- AFA tee-shirts
- Event management for 2026 Parliamentary Roundtable

The grant income from the Department of Social Services (DSS) was expended to actively promote and represent the needs of Forgotten Australians.

Our financial systems and reporting are supported ably and professionally by LDB Accountants & Advisors.

REG CASLEY

Income Statement

Alliance for Forgotten Australians Limited
For the year ended 30 June 2026

	2026	2025
Income		
Grants (Commonwealth) Operating Recurring	162,525.60	194,145.75
Interest received	466.47	1,999.53
Total Income	**162,992.07**	**196,145.28**
Expenses		
Accounting Fees	2,005.46	3,154.56
Bank Fees	0.26	-
Conference/Seminar Costs	48,153.45	47,511.40
Consultants Fees	142,445.96	133,273.42
Depreciation - plant	24.12	-
General expenses	807.71	1,145.10
Insurance	2,458.86	1,936.13
IT costs	979.16	3,090.89
Management Fees	-	5,385.00
Postage	904.64	1,973.50
Printing, storage & media	10,048.46	21,557.54
Subscriptions	286.38	-
Telephone	770.94	1,958.63
Travel, accommodation & conference	-	7,730.00
Total Expenses	**208,885.40**	**228,716.17**
Profit/(Loss) Before Taxation	**(45,893.33)**	**(32,570.89)**
Net Profit/(Loss) After Taxation	**(45,893.33)**	**(32,570.89)**

FUNDING

Alliance for Forgotten Australians Ltd is funded by
the Australian Government Department of Social Services.



REGISTRATION

Name: Alliance for Forgotten Australians Limited
ABN: 31 955 480 765
Endorsement date of effect: October 2014

PATRON
The Hon Jennifer Coate AO

CONTACT DETAILS

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