OPEN PLACE

Support Service for Forgotten Australians

Open Place and the Royal Commission:

- Caroline Carroll, Team leader, Records, Open Place Victoria
- Simon Gardiner, Manager, Open Place Victoria

‘The child's face was like a white wedge of sheer terror. There was in his eyes the terror of a hunted animal. The next morning I heard him at breakfast-time crying, and calling to be let out. His cry was for his parents.’

Letter to the 'Daily Chronicle', May 28 1897

Open Place

- Open Place provides a support service for Forgotten Australians
- Provides a records, family searching and family reunion service, a counselling service and a case work/case management service
- Provides a co-ordinating/facilitating role for 14 support groups across Victoria

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Who are the Forgotten Australians?

- Many Australians remain Ignorant of our child welfare history
- Many know of the Stolen Generation and the Child Migrants; rightly so
- The Forgotten Australians remain largely forgotten



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The hard facts of ‘care’ experience

- Criminal levels of sexual and physical assault
- Separation from all family members
- Loss of family connections
- Abandonment
- Constant verbal abuse
- Deception
- Neglect and exploitation
- Sustained brutality and brutalisation

National responses

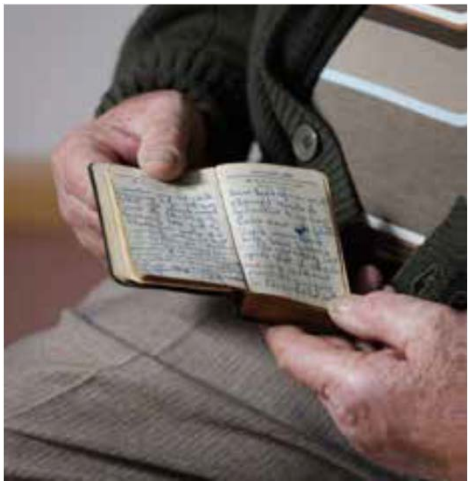
- National Apology by the then Prime Minister, Hon Kevin Rudd MP and the then leader of the Opposition, the Hon Malcolm Turnbull, MP Parliament House, Canberra 16 November 2009
- National History Projects: *Inside* Exhibition and Oral History
- National Find & Connect Services in each State and Territory
- Aged Care Education Project

The lasting impact



‘The repercussions are also felt by the partners and children of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants.’ (pg. 14)

‘For others, there remains a deep sense of hurt, grievance, and anger at the ‘care’ system—fuelled by thoughts of how many past providers breached their duty of care towards children and of the people who abused institutionalised children, but were never brought to justice or punished for crimes against children.’ (pg. 32)



What can FAs contribute to the Royal Commission?

- Vast numbers with lived experience
- No precise figure but best estimate suggests that there are 80,000 living Forgotten Australians in Victoria
- How many suffered sexual abuse and continue to live with this childhood experience?

Why is their contribution important?

Two reasons:

- Opportunity to be heard and publicly affirmed. Public acknowledgement and recognition of past wrongs
- Hold government and past providers to account
- *"Look up and swear by the green of the spring that you'll never forget."* Siegfried Sassoon

How many will participate?

Very good question!! If you know please let us know!

- Many will use the Royal Commissions helpline and supports and manage their own involvement
- At Open Place there has been a 50% increase in new service requests and 110% increase in records requests
- Extrapolation suggests that Open Place will receive over 500 requests for assistance with the Royal Commission

How to assist Forgotten Australians to participate

- Listen and provide information. Allow FA to find the support that fits best
- Respond promptly. Don’t delay. Timing matters
- Know referral and support services; all have a role – Open Place, CLAN, CASAs, Fed. of CLC

What can agencies expect?

- Past residents/care leavers will become increasingly anxious and vigilant
- Prepare for increased requests for records. Redaction practices will be questioned
- Formal complaints of abuse in care will increase

What should agencies now do?

- Provide records and OOHC staff with Royal Commission web site and 1800 number and details of other support services
- Acknowledge to staff the history of the ‘care’ of Forgotten Australians
- Extra resources to heritage/records staff.
- Support services for those in care after 1989

Contact details

Open Place

- 1/8 Bromham Place, Richmond, Victoria 3121
- 1800 779 379
- info@openplace.org.au
- www.openplace.org.au

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