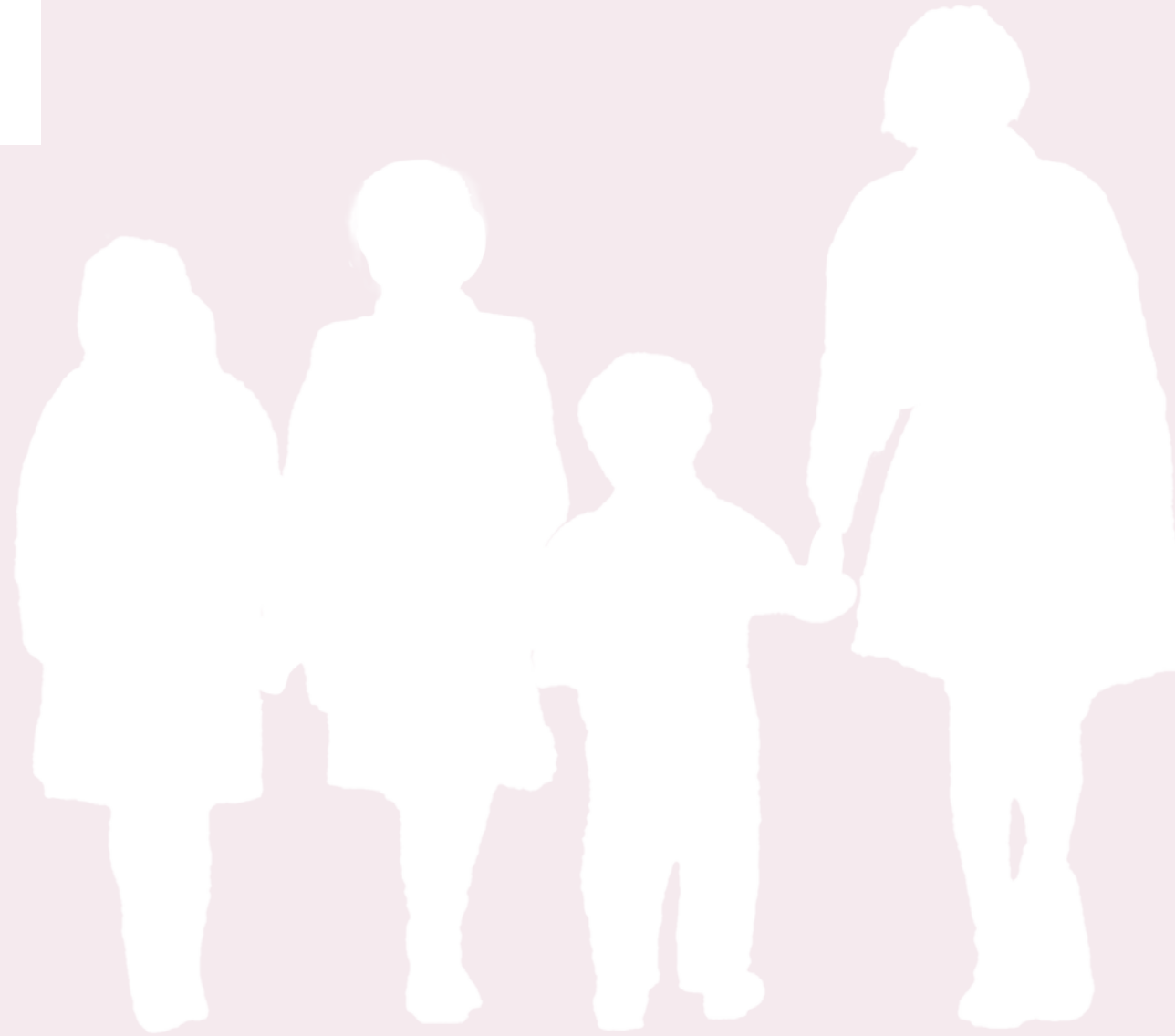




Still unfinished business, still fighting for justice

The history of the Alliance for Forgotten Australians



Foreword

It is my immense pleasure in the year of the Alliance for Forgotten Australian's eighteenth anniversary to launch the report, *Still unfinished business, still fighting for justice. The history of the Alliance for Forgotten Australians*.

AFA has come a long way from its beginnings as a result of the recommendations of the 2004 Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care's report *Forgotten Australians* after which a group of dedicated advocates, service providers and Forgotten Australians volunteered to establish AFA.

With a small amount of resourcing and the support of Families Australia, these dedicated volunteers created a strong collective voice that ensured that many of the 39 recommendations of the 2004 report were delivered, despite the reluctance of governments. This included the Apology in 2009 and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse announced in 2012.

AFA ensured that from the beginning of the establishment of the Royal Commission that the voices of Forgotten Australians were included in its deliberations. Throughout the five years of the Royal Commission, AFA participated in a number of the Royal Commission's processes including roundtable discussions and requests for written submissions to a range of issues. Throughout these processes, AFA participated positively and thoughtfully, providing extensive advice and commentary.

A most significant pillar of the Commission's work was listening to victims/survivors. These sessions afforded attendees the opportunity to have their story heard and acknowledged by the Commission. AFA supported many of its members to participate in private sessions, thereby enriching the ability of the Royal Commission to perform its work. Many people came to those private sessions wanting to break their silence, and to help stop the scourge of the sexual abuse of children.

While the work of the Royal Commission has heightened awareness of child sexual abuse and the need for effective governmental and institutional responses, constant vigilance is required not only to honour the strength and courage of those who came forward during those five years, but to ensure that our nation does its best to provide a safe place for children to grow and develop.

AFA has a significant role to play in ensuring the voices of Forgotten Australians are not diminished or forgotten now that the enquiries and commissions have finished their work. As you will read, there is much to do to ensure that Forgotten Australians get the justice they so rightly deserve, can live the remainder of their lives with dignity, and have access to the services that respond to their diverse needs.

**The Hon Jennifer Coate AO
AFA Patron since 2019**

The Hon Jennifer Coate AO is a former Commissioner for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Introduction

“... children were for many reasons hidden in institutions and forgotten by society when they were placed in care and again when they were released into the ‘outside world’. One person referred to ‘the carpet children’ – as in swept under. These people who spent part or all of their childhood in an institution, children’s home or out-of-home care background have been the forgotten Australians.”

Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee

Forgotten Australians: A Report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as Children.
August 2004.

In 2024, the Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA) turned 18. We’ve produced this booklet so that you can see something of what we’ve achieved. We’d like to share this record of our legacy with you.

More than 500,000 children and young people experienced institutional and out-of-home ‘care’ in Australia between the 1920s and 1990s. Decision-makers thought this was in the ‘best interests of the child’. We can tell you that usually it was not. Tragically, we now understand that many did not experience a caring and supportive environment. Children were abused physically, psychologically, emotionally, and sexually. A damaged child is a damaged adult. The further tragedy is that few knew about what happened or believed that church and state could be so cruel, until the Australian Senate Inquiry into Children and Institutional Care released its report *Forgotten Australians* in 2004.

We took our name from the title of the report. Sometimes we say we didn’t choose this name: it was a name given to us by government. We use the term *Forgotten Australians*, as we think this is least likely to cause offence. Some people call themselves ‘care leavers’ and that term has also been used by the Australian

Government. For some, the term care leaver sits badly. We were not cared for. So how could we have left care?

We wanted to promote and encourage participation by Forgotten Australians: to be recognised in national policies; and included in how services are planned and delivered. We channelled decades of anger and despair towards something constructive. That gave rise to AFA.

Fifteen years ago, on 16 November 2009, the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd apologised to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants for the abuse and suffering they experienced while they were in the ‘care’ of state, territories, and institutions last century. Since then, initiatives supporting Forgotten Australians have been funded by the Australian Government, as well as states, territories, and past providers of ‘care’. We thank all for what has been achieved, and observe that those that work best were developed alongside us. For AFA, it’s been vital that the lived experience of survivors informs the work of governments, even though this has sometimes been an uneasy relationship.

As we reflect on this milestone anniversary, those of us who are left have been thinking about what has been done—and left undone—since the various apologies and the Senate Inquiry.

AFA’S work will continue as we seek justice. Reflecting on AFA’s legacy has reminded me how strong Forgotten Australians are. We will never give up. Like many of you, I didn’t have a good start in my life. And like all of you, I hope we have a good finish, that the years that are left to us see some lifting of the trauma, grief, betrayal and loss we’ve experienced.

There are many people I would like to thank and recognise for their extraordinary efforts in supporting our work. To make a list would not do justice to the names I may miss and so I thank you all from the bottom of my heart.



Caroline Carroll OAM
Chair, Alliance for Forgotten Australians

About Caroline Carroll

Caroline Carroll is the former Community Education Coordinator at Open Place, the Victorian service for Forgotten Australians (Caroline retired from this role in 2022). Caroline is herself a survivor of abuse in many institutional and foster care placements during her childhood. She was separated as a 14-month-old infant from her family, including her seven siblings.

Caroline is the Chair of the national peak body, the Alliance for Forgotten Australians, and will retire from her role with AFA in November 2024 after more than 18 years of service to Forgotten Australians.

Caroline received an OAM in January 2014. It was for ‘services to the community, particularly to persons raised in institutional or other out-of-home care.’

‘I was honoured to receive this acknowledgement. But such honours are bittersweet. Nothing makes up for our lost childhoods, our lost families, and lost opportunities. If we manage to fulfil some of our potential, it’s against a background of grief, pain, and trauma.’



Caroline

SECTION 1:

The Alliance for Forgotten Australians

AFA has helped me to be the person I am today. It's given me the courage to stand up for myself and to push hard for the Forgotten Australians in Tasmania. I hope for the future of AFA that we can get the politicians to listen to us and act like they promised. Work together to fight for justice for all Forgotten Australians around Australia.

David Henderson
AFA Board member 2024

The Senate Inquiry wouldn't have been credible had it not enabled a substantial and remarkable contribution by Forgotten Australians.

The Inquiry identified the need for a national approach in coordinating advocacy and services for Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants.

Arising from this came AFA, established in 2006, and launched in 2007 at Parliament House in Canberra by Senator Andrew Murray, himself a Former Child Migrant.

From the start, AFA's advocacy demanded that the views and insights of people with lived experience informs policy and administration in a meaningful way. Just as we Forgotten Australians are professional advocates; we acknowledge that our partnerships with service providers and other professionals have been important for our effectiveness. For a small organisation, we've achieved an extraordinary output of submissions, research, reports, commentary and advocacy at the highest levels of government on the myriads of issues affecting Forgotten Australians. But more importantly, our advocacy has shown that many of us survive and are serious contributors to society.

At the National Apology to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants in November 2009, the Australian Government announced funding of \$26.5 million for various initiatives, including seven Find and Connect Support services, as well as a modest amount of funding for AFA. While this funding to us of \$150,000 each year has never been increased, it now extends to June 2026.



Forgotten Australian members of the Alliance for Forgotten Australians L-R: David Jackson, Laurie Humphries, Caroline Carroll, Tony Young, Wilma Robb, Pamela Vernon, Allan Allaway, Frank Golding

SECTION 2:

The Purple Booklet



Most people call this the 'Purple Booklet'. Few of us call it by its rather long name – *Forgotten Australians: Supporting Survivors of Childhood Institutional Care in Australia*. We were aware of a huge gap in people's knowledge about Forgotten Australians and how best to support us. We wanted the booklet to help service providers, doctors, nurses, mental health professionals, dentists, counsellors and welfare workers know about us. Demand for the booklet remains high, even after 15 years.

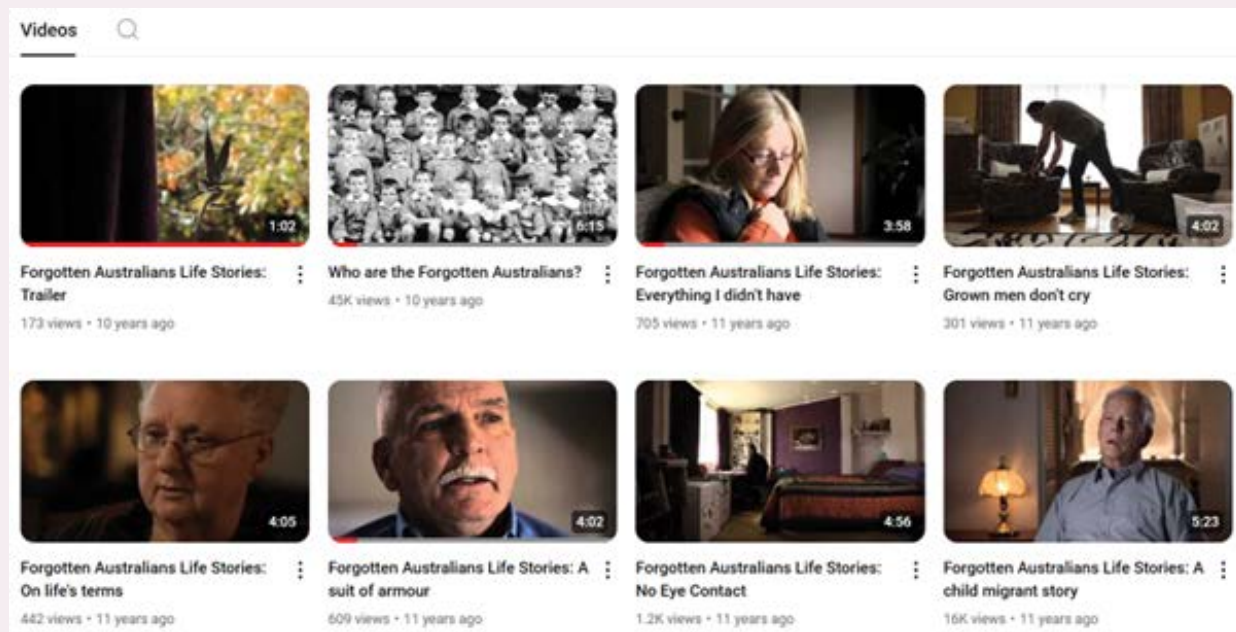


SECTION 3:

Video stories of Forgotten Australians

As well as the purple booklets, in 2011 we made a series of videos telling the story of six people who started life differently—one of them in another country—but who shared the experience of a childhood in children’s Homes, institutions or foster care. You can see them as strong and hopeful people, but they live with the trauma of childhood abuse and neglect, and they find many aspects of everyday living challenging.

These stories are told through the eyes of Caroline, Allan, Tony, Wilma, Pamela, and Laurie, who were then members of AFA.



SECTION 4:

Forgotten Australians' Identity Card

For a long time, Forgotten Australians asked for what they called an 'identity card', which describes what is a Forgotten Australian, and how the trauma of their childhood may affect how they interact with others. Such a card means they may not have to continuously tell their story, particularly to health professionals they deal with. In 2022, AFA developed and distributed more than 4,000 cards

I was in hospital and it was pretty tough. I was scared and angry and the staff didn't know what to do with me. I showed them this card and almost immediately the situation changed.

A Forgotten Australian in Queensland



SECTION 5:

Lost Innocents and Forgotten Australians Revisited, 2009



The Lost Innocents and Forgotten Australians Revisited Inquiry reported on the implementation of recommendations from two previous Senate Inquiry reports and concluded that there had been a significant lack of progress. We were not surprised.

As Chair, Caroline Carroll gave evidence at public hearings, and AFA provided written submissions about the response to each of the recommendations. We highlighted the lack of national leadership in implementation, leading to varied and unequal delivery across Australia. This was confusing and frustrating for Forgotten Australians. AFA's observations were reflected in the final report, particularly the call for governments and institutions to apologise to Forgotten Australians; for significant changes needed for access to records; and for calls for national advocacy groups to be resourced to coordinate national responses.

SECTION 6:

National Apology to Forgotten Australians & Former Child Migrants 2009

An apology had been a major recommendation of the Forgotten Australians report. AFA advocated for an apology to individual politicians, and in written and oral submissions to state and federal inquiries.

The only thing I would like an apology to do is to acknowledge that it happened. That is a big thing. I have given a few talks over the last few years and people just do not believe it or it is hard for them to comprehend. The word 'sorry' after all these years does not excite me; just the apology for it having happened; saying, 'We did it and we apologise.'

Laurie Humphries
AFA

In October 2009, AFA's great supporter, Jenny Macklin, then Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, announced the Apology saying:

The Apology will acknowledge that what happened in the past was both real and wrong. It will make sure that a largely invisible part of our history is put firmly on the record. And it will remind the community of what happened to many of these children—the loss of family, the loss of identity and, in the case of child migrants, the loss of their country.

The Apology took place on 16 November 2009, when on behalf of the Australian Government the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd apologised to those who suffered abuse or neglect in institutional 'care'. He was supported by the then Opposition Leader, Malcolm Turnbull.

The Great Hall at Parliament House in Canberra was filled with Forgotten Australians and supporters, including AFA members. For many it was a deeply emotional and meaningful day—with acknowledgement of the abuse and neglect that had been experienced but for so long hidden and ignored. AFA was

specifically mentioned and thanked for its contributions and advocacy by the Prime Minister, as was Walter Tuysyn, the Tasmanian representative of AFA, who had died only days before the Apology for which he and his colleagues had fought for so long. For some Forgotten Australians, the Apology eased the shame they'd lived with and opened a locked door to a very dark past.

We then held a fantastic barbecue out on the front lawns of Parliament House. For the first time and the only time while I have been in parliament, I got leave from question time to go and join all the Forgotten Australians and child migrants on the front lawns. The mood was ecstatic. One woman, who had got out of her hospital bed that day and travelled from Victoria, said to me that she had thought she was coming to parliament to hear just another diatribe, a lot of words and the delivery of non-meaningful speeches by politicians; but she said that it was well worth leaving her hospital bed and travelling to Canberra to hear the words of the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. She said she could go to her grave happy now that the Apology had been delivered.

Steve Irons, member for Swan Western Australia, and survivor of institutional 'care'.



Jenny Macklin and Caroline Carroll

SECTION 7:

Monuments & Memorials

There are no plans for a national memorial, and AFA would like to see one created in Canberra, reflecting the national ownership of this piece of Australia's history... Any such memorial...contributes towards banishing the widespread ignorance of this important piece of history and bringing the experiences and needs of the survivors to the fore.

AFA's submission to *The Implementation of Lost innocents and Forgotten Australians* revisited.

The *Forgotten Australians* report recommended that Commonwealth and state governments should provide funding for 'suitable memorials commemorating care leavers to be determined after local consultation.' We strongly supported such places of remembrance.

Our members advocated for monuments or memorial gardens, as well as the placement of plaques or establishment of heritage centres in the sites of former institutions. The Australian Government provided funding. In some states, governments provided further contributions to memorials. These provide a safe place for Forgotten Australians to visit, to reflect, to remember. There are now monuments in Queensland; New South Wales; South Australia; Victoria; Western Australia; Tasmania; and acknowledgement seats in Darwin and Alice Springs in the Northern Territory.

AFA continues to contribute through the National Memorial Advisory Group to advise on the design for a National Memorial for Victims and Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse, to be located in Canberra. The selected design 'Transparency and Truths' is expected to be completed in 2026.



The South Australian Memorial to the Forgotten Australians

SECTION 8:

Funding announced at the National Apology

Among other initiatives, the funds were provided for seven Find and Connect Support services, and a modest amount of \$150,000 per annum as core funding for AFA. While this level of funding has never increased, it's been extended to June 2026.

AFA welcomed national history projects announced at the Apology. We provided advice on these during planning and implementation:

Oral history (National Library of Australia) and exhibition (National Museum of Australia)

The National Library's oral history project recorded the lives and experiences of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants. Interviews were conducted across Australia and are preserved in the library. These are publicly available, subject to any access conditions made by interviewees.

More than 200 people, including members of AFA, told their life stories. Advocates and associated professionals such as welfare workers, employees of institutions and administrators were also interviewed for their perspectives. The interviews tell us how Forgotten Australians were affected by their experiences in 'care' from the 1920s onwards in more than 140 institutions and foster homes. We shall not be forgotten, our stories will live beyond us.

The library also produced a booklet called *You can't forget things like that* to introduce this oral history collection.

Inside: Life in Children's Homes and Institutions

This exhibition shared the experiences of some of the children who spent time in institutional 'care' in Australia last century.

The stories, photographs and personal objects from Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants and members of the Stolen Generations provided a chance to understand some of the hidden history that affected many people. At the exhibition's opening, participants were visibly moved. Hundreds of comments in the exhibition's visitors' book show how members of the public were shocked at what had happened to children in their own life times, some visitors later said that they'd lived near to such institutions and were horrified to learn what had happened. The exhibition profoundly and tangibly illuminated their understanding of this tragic history.

Inside was shown at museums around Australia from 2011 to 2014, including the National Museum in Canberra; the Melbourne Museum; the Maritime Museum in Fremantle, Western Australia; and the Queensland Museum.

SECTION 9:

Find and Connect Support services

AFA has meant being able to understand all aspects of the AFA organisation. To bring back important information for all our Forgotten Australians to Western Australia. A platform for the many needs of our people who are still forgotten in getting a better deal for aged care, records and dental programs. I have learned so much about other organisations and have had a chance in life to have a further personal development. I enjoy my AFA role and hope to continue for years to come.

Suzanne Burke
AFA Board member 2024



AFA National Forum April 2023



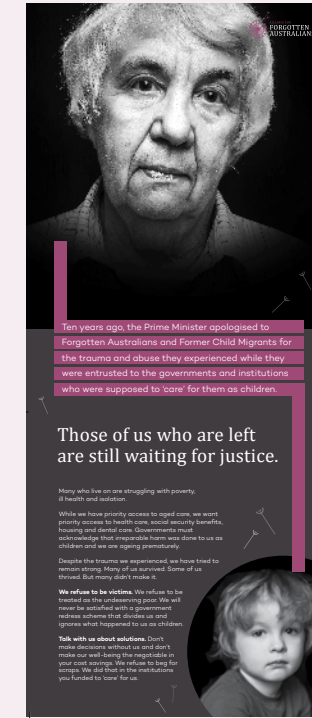
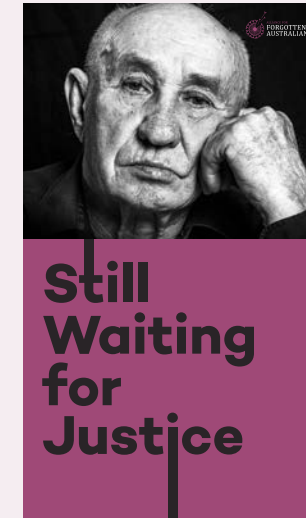
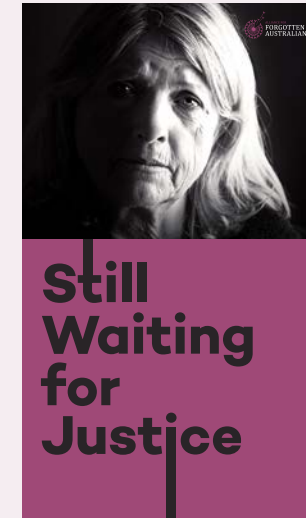
AFA National Forum June 2024

AFA has had a close relationship with the Australian Government-funded network of Find and Connect Support services in each state and territory (NSW supports the ACT). AFA has brought the voice of Forgotten Australians to how these services are delivered and administered, often through local reference groups. For example, together with a group of Forgotten Australians, AFA worked vigorously privately and publicly when in 2019-20 the Victorian Government was considering closing Open Place in Victoria. Open Place remains open to this day.

Over many years, AFA advised government on the issues for Forgotten Australians who contact these services.

SECTION 10:

10th Anniversary of the 2009 Apology to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants – Unfinished Business



In 2019, AFA sought feedback from members and other Forgotten Australians about how they would like to remember this significant anniversary. Almost everyone believed that it was an occasion for reflection and acknowledgement, rather than a celebration, given that some of the recommendations from the *Forgotten Australians* report of 2004 had only been partially actioned, or not actioned at all.

To mark the Anniversary, AFA produced and distributed more than 4,000 brochures as part of a campaign: 'Still waiting for Justice—unfinished business.' The brochure was distributed to various ministers and government departments, and all Find and Connect Support services for distribution to Forgotten Australians.

The campaign called for a redress scheme that covered all forms of abuse, as well as priority access to health care, social security benefits, housing and dental care. We are still waiting.

SECTION 11:

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

For those of us who have felt at first hand the damage institutional out-of-home 'care' has caused, we can only say: The past is not dead; it is not even past.

Caroline Carroll, Chair.
March 2017.

AFA was instrumental in advocating for the Royal Commission, and attended its announcement and launch in November 2012 at Kirribilli House by the then Prime Minister Julia Gillard. The Royal Commission and the subsequent establishment of the National Redress Scheme framed much of the work of AFA between 2012 and 2018. AFA developed multiple submissions, attended hearings, participated in roundtables, conducted and attended consultations and community events.

However, AFA, along with other advocacy and support organisations, strongly advocated for expanded terms of reference in the lead up to the Royal Commission, and in our submissions throughout the process. We were very concerned that many Forgotten Australians experienced physical, psychological and emotional abuse, but this suffering was unrecognised. As predicted by AFA, restricting the terms of reference for the Royal Commission affected eligibility for the National Redress Scheme to those who experienced sexual abuse.

In her opening statement to the Senate Inquiry in February 2018 Commonwealth Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Bill 2017 Caroline Carroll said:

Many of us believe that the terms of reference for the Royal Commission focussed only on sexual abuse, because the gurus in Finance and Treasury wanted to contain costs by limiting the scope of the Royal Commission, and the Government accepted their recommendations. Given this cost savings exercise at the expense of our lives, it's not surprising that the Royal Commission recommended a redress scheme which only covers sexual abuse, and the Australian Government's scheme reflects this.

Despite our dismay with the terms of reference, we were determined to approach the Royal Commission positively. We provided extensive advice and commentary throughout its process. AFA referred to the Royal Commission as one which 'honoured Forgotten Australians by providing a safe place to tell their stories—many for the first time.'

AFA provided seven submissions to the Royal Commission, on the topics of preventing sexual abuse of children in out-of-home care; civil litigation; redress schemes; statutory victims of crime compensation schemes; redress and civil litigation; records and recordkeeping practices; and on criminal justice. *The Forgotten Australians* report recommended that Commonwealth and state governments should provide funding for 'suitable memorials commemorating care leavers to be determined after local consultation.' We strongly supported such places of remembrance.

While the Royal Commission was significant in what it revealed, many of us felt something of a vacuum on its completion. We were concerned that the momentum would be lost.

In addition, despite the Commission's findings, in some instances the behaviour of perpetrators hardly changed.

Past providers continue to traumatise Forgotten Australians with the legal tactics they used for decades to thwart justice.

Following the Royal Commission, we were honoured to have former Commissioner Jennifer Coate AO accept an invitation to become our patron.



AFA Members with Jennifer Coate

SECTION 12:

The National Redress Scheme

Forgotten Australians have told their stories, exposed themselves and re-traumatised themselves too many times for [compensation] not to happen, the money ... if it comes, won't be enough to buy a house or live in comfort, but it may lighten their load a bit.

Caroline Carroll
Chair, AFA

In 2018, AFA members distributed more than 10,000 postcards Australia-wide as part of a campaign for a comprehensive national redress scheme.

AFA made many contributions at this time with submissions, meetings with Ministers and commissioners. Caroline Carroll was a member of the Independent Advisory Council on Redress to advise on the design of the scheme. Some of our feedback was acted upon; some remained on the table.

The main issue for AFA was that eligibility for redress was restricted to those who suffered sexual abuse, and excluded those who suffered physical, emotional, and psychological abuse.

How do we present a lifetime ruined on a few pages? When the main question you ask is about sexual assault. Redress should not be about sex. It should be about the effects state 'care' had on our lives. Tasmanian AFA representative.

The impact was strongly outlined in our 2020 submission to the Second Anniversary Review of the National Redress Scheme, which identified the concept of the 'deserving and undeserving abused'.

There is a tragic irony in the fact that the current National Redress Scheme is limited to those who experienced sexual abuse. It means that many Forgotten Australians have yet again been forgotten because the institutional abuse that they suffered was of a form other than explicitly sexual.

Again, we adopted a constructive approach to the design and implementation of the National Redress Scheme—supporting it as the initial response, while continuing to lobby and advise on how it could be redesigned to justly serve Forgotten Australians.

SECTION 13:

The National Apology to Victims & Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse 2018

AFA recognises that for some an Apology won't make up for the loss of a childhood. We see the Apology as being just one step in the unfinished business governments and past providers have with us.

Pamella Vernon
Vice President, AFA

On 22 October 2018, the then Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, apologised to victims and survivors of institutional child sexual abuse on behalf of the Australian Government. The Apology was part of the Australian Government's response to the Royal Commission's recommendations.

AFA was represented on the Reference Group for the Apology. In addition, AFA supported more than 55 Forgotten Australians to attend in person.

This is an important part of the healing process for many of us who suffered terribly in institutional 'care' last century. I know many have mixed feelings about the Apology. It has stirred up profoundly disturbing memories, but it has also stirred up extraordinary stories of courage and survival. A Forgotten Australian attendee.



Former Prime Minister, Scott Morrison

SECTION 14: We are Ageing

Most of us are now in our 60s to 90s. In another generation we will all be gone. Many of us face getting old with existential fear. Many of us started in institutions and many of us are terrified of ending up in institutions. We know what to expect. For that reason, AFA has made aged care an advocacy priority.

AFA is represented on the National Aged Care and Community Care Round Table, and works in partnerships with older persons advocacy organisations. The following are other initiatives we've undertaken for ageing Forgotten Australians:



Don Bridges in *Open Doors*

Our First Aged Care Project

The 'Caring for Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants and Stolen Generations' project was an information package for aged care services in 2016. AFA worked with government, aged care industry representatives and the other national advocacy groups in developing this package as a first step in improving support for older Forgotten Australians across the aged care sector.

AFA's submission to the Aged Care Royal Commission

In 2019, AFA made a comprehensive submission to the Aged Care Royal Commission highlighting the needs of Forgotten Australians in requiring specialist supports within the aged care system. The submission specifically focused on the terror many of us face with being re-institutionalised, and suggested ways for training aged care professionals and staff so that they know who we are and how better to support us. While the recommendations in the Royal Commission's final report didn't specifically reference Forgotten Australians, our issues are highlighted throughout the many volumes of the report.

Open Doors Film

The COVID pandemic enabled AFA to divert funds to the production of an educational film—*Open Doors*—about Forgotten Australians and the trauma they may face when entering the aged care system. *Open Doors* is a short, 20-minute one-take film which has been screened at five international film festivals. It features two Australian actors, Don Bridges and Clare Pickering. The film was produced by Farshid Akhlaghi, an award-winning Australian film maker, and launched by Jennifer Coate in 2021.

Open Doors is not an easy film to watch. It's intended to make people feel, to experience the pain and despair that overwhelms a survivor when he returns to an institution in old age. It's about turning full circle in life, to circumstances that have haunted Bill, the protagonist, for decades before being revealed in their full horror at a time when he is as vulnerable as he was as a small boy.

Open Doors shows something of Australia's hidden history, a history most people don't know about, a history that those who do often prefer to forget. *Open Doors* will remain as a reflection of the evil done to children by the state, and often in the name of faith.



Telling our stories - the Life Stories project

Story telling is recognised as an important element in healing. To tell a story suggests that the storyteller has hope. And with hope, there is a future. Forgotten Australians want to tell their story in their own words, not the frequently hostile and judgemental words we found in our files from institutions and governments. A life story is something tangible to be handed to a family member or friend. A story might say: 'This is who I am. This is how I survived.'

In 2021, AFA was delighted to receive a grant to undertake the Life Stories project for Forgotten Australians. We were fortunate to recruit skilled and compassionate writers to work with more than 60 Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants to record their stories. We were unable to keep up with the demand for storytelling. The printed stories included participants' photos and memorabilia. Forgotten Australians told us that they had had very little as children, and this made their printed copies even more precious. Many said that their stories became an important way of connecting with their families.

SECTION 15:

15. Strengthening the voices of Forgotten Australians



In 2023, AFA decided to change its corporate structure. Forgotten Australians are now the majority on our Board. Affiliate members are drawn from support services.

This change strengthens the voices of Forgotten Australians in our work, advocacy and communication.

AFA has provided me with a voice to represent my community and given me opportunities to discuss what is important for myself and others in my community. AFA has helped to get information out about Forgotten Australians and work towards common goals with a collaborative group of like-minded people including our Board members. We strive forward to make changes and improvement to all Forgotten Australians' lives.

Jan Schaffarz,
AFA Board member 2024

SECTION 16:

AFA 2024 and beyond

We know from feedback we've received that the power of our advocacy has been recognised by many of the people who we've worked with, including Ministers and government officials. Most importantly, the authentic, powerful, no-nonsense voices of Forgotten Australians have been brought to social policy. However, we've been frustrated that there's been a continuing need to educate and remind the Australian community of our existence. Sadly, many Forgotten Australians still feel that they are too often forgotten and invisible. There is much work still to be done.



Hilly, Dave, Caroline with a Minister Rishworth

For the future, we want AFA to continue to be funded and an increase in that funding to expand our capacity. We want Find and Connect Support services to be continued, as well as the Find and Connect Roundtable. Priority housing, dental care and aged care are essential. It continues to be important for health professionals to know who we are. Our place in the tertiary curriculum is one way of doing this. A national remembrance week would complement our memorials. And a redress scheme for New South Wales. We know that this state had one of the highest numbers of children in 'care' last century. Why hasn't this been done?

What we've achieved is due to the incredible commitment by our members and staff; and to individuals within government and others we like to think of as ambassadors.

You will have read the recurring themes in this booklet: that we want people to know who we are; and to know how best to support us, particularly as we age.

All governments have unfinished business. We have unfinished business with governments. We are getting older and some of us are prematurely ageing. Our health may be failing. Some of us have made an apparent success of our lives and have hidden our pain and scars pretty well. Others are living in poverty and despair. We don't want to be re-institutionalised, and the prospect scares the hell out of us. Despite all that has been done, you have unfinished business. Your unfinished business is our unfinished business. We need to be supported to live the remainder of our lives with dignity; safely; as healthily as possible; on our terms; without asking for scraps.

Caroline Carroll, Chair.



AFA Board April 2023



Alliance for Forgotten Australians

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*Still unfinished business, still fighting for justice.
The history of the Alliance for Forgotten
Australians. November 2024*

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