

**Launch: Long Term Outcomes for Forgotten Australians (LOFA).
An Australian Research Council funded national study, conducted by
the University of NSW, Sydney, 18 February 2015**

What do we already know about Forgotten Australians: about our experiences in “care” as children and our subsequent lives as adults?

There is an extensive literature written by Forgotten Australians about these experiences. Regrettably much of this literature has received little attention.

There is the Senate Report of 2004 which listened to and recorded the experiences of 600 Forgotten Australians, as they shared their stories and their lives. Again, although the report is often quoted, of the 39 recommendations, only a few have been implemented. And we are now a decade on from the tabling of that Senate report.

In Victoria, since 1976, we have had 17 official inquiries that have examined the state’s “care” system. All have expressed regret and offered solutions. Few have offered any consolation to those who have endured the system; all, largely, have been future focussed.

It is difficult at times not to feel like a piece of flotsam as the brave new world of “reforms”, “service improvement” and a “re-engineered care system”, piloted by commissions and inquiries chugs past.

The questions for all Forgotten Australians remain: Why is this experience, which is shared by 500,000 children now adults, so discounted? Why does it seem, despite a decade of advocacy, almost impossible to have the range of needs presented by adults with these childhood experience met by sensitive and responsive social policy?

What else needs to be known?

Is there more to find out?

How will this research help Forgotten Australians?

Let’s begin with two fundamental questions: What do we want and what do we need?

1. Forgotten Australians want to be seen and understood. We want our history recognised and the circumstances of our childhood and the impact of this childhood understood.

The LOFA research can help with this.

2. Forgotten Australians need practical support and priority access to services (aged care, medical services and dental care come to mind)

The LOFA research has a role to play in this.

3. **Above all FAs need justice.** We need a national redress scheme that accounts for us all; not just those who experienced sexual abuse while in the care of the state or the state's proxy, a charitable institution.

The LOFA research needs to keep in mind that there is a national process of discovery underway; the Royal Commission. This process has done much good investigative work but this has come at a cost to vulnerable individuals. For example: "I have told my story so what? How many more times and so on?"

Forgotten Australian will look at the LOFA research and say: ***What will it do that is different?***

Will the research assist in getting positive responses to the three areas of need that I have outlined above?

Be aware some of your target group may be sceptical and wary. ***Why should I go out on a limb again? What changes will this bring?***

The last thing I want to say is this. Forgotten Australians are the subject of this research. You must be careful that we do not become the objects of this research. All research will reasonably probe and analyse and make conclusions. You, the researcher, must never forget that every life and every experience you contact and connect with (however briefly) has meaning and is to be treasured. Don't objectify us and our experience.

Our childhood experiences remain forever with us; for better and for worse. Our memories of these experiences will always shape us. They shape our capacity to hope, our ability to be optimistic and, most importantly of all, they shape how we love and how we accept love.

I don't need to spell it out. But the terrible truth is that, for many of us, the Forgotten Australians, these childhood experiences and memories remain appalling real - and appalling real is the impact, of these daily memories, on our adult lives in terms of Hope Optimism and Love.

This is an important research project. It has our [Alliance for Forgotten Australians] support. It is proper and respectful that the University of New South Wales is consulting with us about the research. We have a vested interest in the outcomes of this research. We wish it well.

Caroline Carroll OAM, Chair, Alliance for Forgotten Australians