



Australian Government
Department of Health

Caring for Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants and Stolen Generations

An information package for aged care services

Booklet

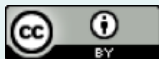
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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are warned that
this publication may contain images of deceased persons.

In the 20th century, more than 500,000 children were placed in institutions and out-of-home care around Australia. Many were taken from their families, often without permission, and life was generally hard for them. They are Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants and Stolen Generations.

Forgotten Australians

Up to 500,000 Australian-born children in the 20th century, including some of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent, were placed in 'care' or became 'state wards' for different reasons: illness or death of either parent, family breakdown, abuse and limited community or government support for families in need. They lived in children's homes, orphanages, other institutions, and foster homes. Much of this occurred before the beginning of the social safety nets which became widespread in Australia after World War II. Forgotten Australians¹ were also referred to as foster children, wardies, homies or clannies. Living in institutional settings created a culture which often resulted in a loss of identity, such as having their birth name changed or being referred to as a number. As many have not reunited with family in adulthood, they may find it difficult to regain their family heritage, culture or sense of their local community.

Former Child Migrants

From 1947 to the early 1970s, over 7,000 children were sent to Australia from the United Kingdom and Malta and placed in institutions. Children from the UK were deported without their parents' consent and often were told they were orphans, but almost all of them were not. These people are the Former Child Migrants.

Children from the UK were deported without their parents' consent.

¹ The Senate Inquiry report 2004 created the term Forgotten Australians

Stolen Generations

Stolen Generations are children of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent who were taken from their families and communities by Federal and State government agencies and church missions under the forcible removal policies from the late 1800s until the 1970s. They were placed in institutions, training farms and schools, in foster care, or were adopted to be 'brought up white'. In being forced to assimilate, they lost their names, language, cultures and cultural heritage. Most Stolen Generations who are alive today are grandparents, great-grandparents and even great-great grandparents.

Almost every Aboriginal family today can identify one or more family members lost as a result of the forcible removal policies. So too can some Torres Strait Islander families.

These policies caused major losses of cultural and social knowledge, tradition and connection to country, with lasting effects on the wellbeing and identity of Stolen Generations members and their children, families and descendants. These effects are still felt today and will for some time.

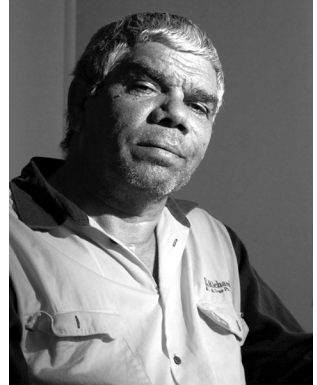
Recent history

In the past two decades the Australian Senate has conducted a number of inquiries into the abuse of children in institutional and out-of-home care in the 20th century.

On 13 February 2008, the Australian Government moved a Motion of Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples in the House of Representatives, apologising for past laws, policies and practices which devastated Australia's First Nations Peoples, in particular Stolen Generations.

On 16 November 2009, the Australian Government apologised to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants and their families for the wrongs that they had suffered. The apology reflected that Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants, and their families continue to carry the burden of their experiences throughout their lives.

The apologies provided a formal recognition and acknowledgment of the injustices experienced and suffering endured.



Understanding the concerns, fears and anxieties of Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants and Stolen Generations

Many of those who spent time in institutions or out-of-home care as children were deprived of love and a sense of belonging. Most were denied family support and contact and experienced separation, loss and abandonment. They were often taken from their families without permission. They were often lonely, beaten, abused and exploited, and subjected to punishment, rigid rules, humiliation, and physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

Many were denied an adequate education, and were forced to work virtually as the slaves of those entrusted with their care. Many lost their culture, or were taught to fear and hate their own cultural heritage. They often became ashamed and angry, and suffered low self-esteem. They may have retained these feelings throughout their lives.

Many people from these groups find traumatic childhood memories and fears returning when they think about their aged care needs. Those anxieties may spring from childhood experiences when they were harmed by those who had been entrusted with their care. Some find the prospect of aged care delivered outside familiar places as truly frightening.

Working with these individuals requires a sympathetic understanding of the mistreatment and loss they experienced during childhood. They are burdened with memories of trauma which create fear and anxiety. However, if aged care workers can recognise and understand their concerns, their time in aged care can become more positive and engaging.



Many people from these groups find traumatic childhood memories and fears returning when they think about their aged care needs.

More than ever, personal care and flexible service delivery are priorities in aged care. These are especially important when considering how to deliver care to these special needs groups.

Health status

Many Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants and Stolen Generations express a fear of authority figures. Due to traumatic experiences and abuse by authority figures many Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants and Stolen Generations may be reluctant to seek health services, especially in hospitals.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that some people from these groups may require earlier access to aged care services and may have generally poorer health outcomes than is typically the case for their age group. There is a higher prevalence of homelessness, drug or alcohol misuse and mental health issues in these groups than in the broader population.

Many people in these groups were physically or sexually abused.

Appropriate and sensitive care

Care provided for people who have been physically and/or sexually abused should be sensitive to their experiences, meet their individual needs, and be culturally appropriate.

Some options to assist with this include:

- trying, wherever possible, to encourage the individual to be independent in daily tasks, specifically dressing and bathing
- consider special equipment/or aids to promote independence during functional decline
- if a care recipient has to be bathed by a care worker, they may wish to choose the gender of the person assisting them.



Caring

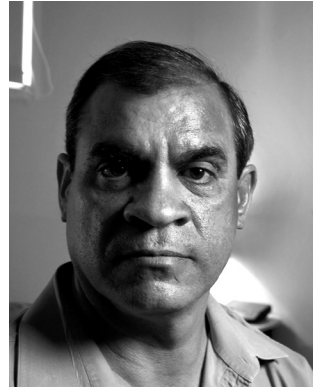
Most people who spent time in institutions had rigidly controlled childhoods. They often had strict schedules for getting up and eating, praying, washing and lights-out. Not surprisingly many of them fear aged care where they will be told when and how to do everything.

Before you can establish supportive routines, you will need to find out as much as you can about the person in your care.

Remember it is good practice to adapt your routines and services to the needs of people in your care. They are individuals, like you, with likes and dislikes. A good and effective routine is always based on mutual interests. You will need to be prepared to compromise.

Some options to assist with this include:

- being as flexible as you can
- preparing the person for activities or events and including them in decisions or scheduling their time in situations where choice can be accommodated without compromising care outcomes
- making sure there are changes in routine that the person will enjoy, such as a trip to the shops or a visit to the local park.



Most who spent time in institutions had rigidly controlled childhoods.

Food

As children, Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants and Stolen Generations were often underfed, badly fed or force fed. Some menus had little variety and children were made to finish unpalatable or cold food. Many now dislike porridge or anything served with white sauce. Many dread having to eat in a communal environment.

Consenting or refusing food is an expression of someone's autonomy. One of the most difficult ethical issues families and aged care workers confront is managing older people who refuse food or can no longer eat.

Some options to assist with this include:

- when helping with feeding, sit at eye-level (if culturally appropriate) with the person being fed. Take time to establish a relationship and a relaxed atmosphere
- serving foods the care recipient likes or that are culturally significant to them. In their own home, encourage them or help them to prepare it
- offering supportive or comfort care (e.g. hand feeding, being responsive to requests about the need for food and drink, or their wish to refuse them).

Children were made to finish unpalatable or cold food.

Belongings

As children, many Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants and Stolen Generations had nothing apart from what was issued to them. This often was only a poor quality uniform. As a result, they can be very attached to personal possessions. They may find it difficult to deal with things, which others in an aged care facility may take for granted, such as sending their clothes to be laundered with everyone else's. They may be afraid that their clothes will get mixed up, they won't get them back or someone else will wear them. Some options to assist with this include:

- not touching any belongings a care recipient might have in their room or house, unless you are asked to do so. This might include a favourite chair, a television, computer, DVD player, radio, CD player, a bedside light or small table, plants, videos, photos, books or music
- making sure that the person has labelled their clothing if they are to be washed by staff. If the resident can't label their clothing, you might be able to do this for them
- getting to know the stories behind their belongings.

Privacy

Privacy was denied to many people in these groups as children.

They often slept in dormitories and showered or bathed communally. They often do not wish to experience this type of invasion of privacy again.

Some options to assist with this include:

- when someone enters an aged care home, discussing whether they want to share a room or have a private room (if accommodation options allow a choice)
- discussing the configuration of the room with the care recipient. For example, some people may want their bed to be placed against a wall or close to a window
- ensure privacy when showering or changing, or involving family or loved ones at such times.

Privacy was denied to many people in these groups, as children.

Locks

For many Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants and Stolen Generations, the thought of being locked in or even the sound of someone passing and jangling keys can cause terror.

Some options to assist with this include:

- providing care recipients with the freedom to use outdoor areas where they can walk around safely
- using locks only where necessary to ensure privacy and security
- limiting the jangling of keys around care recipients.

Many people in these groups were exploited.

Education

As children, many people in these groups were exploited, made to perform menial and physically harsh tasks, and often received little education. Literacy is an issue for some and fear of humiliation holds people back from revealing their low literacy levels. Some options to assist with this include:

- assisting people to complete forms by explaining what information is required and what it will be used for. If possible, ask a family member, carer or friend to help overcome any communication difficulties
- never hurrying someone while they are completing a form or supplying other written documents
- helping care recipients with everyday tasks like reading the TV guide or newspaper. You may wish to start up a book club to encourage literate care recipients to read to care recipients who have low literacy levels
- adding audio books to your library as a way of addressing literacy issues.

Identity

Many Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants and Stolen Generations cannot produce proof of identity. Some have no birth certificate or had their birth name changed. Some were known during their early years only as numbers, which may have undermined their sense of self. People who had these experiences as children often have difficulty answering standard identity questions. Many of them are reluctant to discuss their childhood experiences and the impact on their adult lives. Because of the stigma it carried, often they have not told even close friends, partners or their children that they were in the 'care' system.

Some have no birth certificate or had their name changed.

Some options to assist with this include:

- being flexible about accepting documents to establish identity if you think someone may be a Forgotten Australian, Former Child Migrant or Stolen Generations. Always discuss options with them and propose solutions, rather than assuming a one-size-fits-all approach
- being observant. At first people with these childhood experiences may not tell their care provider they belong to one or more of these groups. If you observe heightened reactions to situations, you may wish to discuss their care approach with your supervisor
- using pets. Someone may not want to discuss their memories unless they have established a rapport with a staff member, but many have positive memories of pets – so you may wish to bring pets into care settings, where possible.



Celebrations

Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants and Stolen Generations may feel a heightened sense of isolation or experience depression when others are celebrating. These include milestones such as birthdays and family-oriented celebrations such as Christmas, Father's Day or Mother's Day.

Some options to assist with this include:

- discussing with the care recipient ways of lessening their social isolation, including inviting visitors through the Community Visitors Scheme
- being sensitive to the fact that, for these groups, 'celebrating' may actually be more stressful and isolating than not marking the occasion. It is best to ask care recipients about their preferences for acknowledging (or not) milestones or holidays.

They may feel a heightened sense of isolation or experience depression when others are celebrating.

Culture

Many of the people in these groups were separated from their families in difficult circumstances, or forcibly removed. Institutional living was an imposed culture which led to a loss of their cultural heritage. Because they often have not been able to reunite with family as adults, they have not been able to regain or reconnect with their family heritage.

Some options to assist with this include:

- discussing cultural, religious and other needs sensitively
- attempting to expose care recipients to cultures (predominately their own) in an entertaining way to give them a sense of belonging to their culture and making them aware of the enriching impact that cultures have. Some groups listed in the 'For more information' section may be able to help.

For more information

This information Booklet and all other components of the information package can be found on the Department of Health website at: <https://agedcare.health.gov.au/careleavers>.

Groups that offer support for Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants or Stolen Generations may help your organisation to better understand these individuals, and explain how you can deliver sensitive and appropriate care to them.

For Forgotten Australians

The Alliance for Forgotten Australians

The Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA) is a national advocacy and policy agency.

AFA's mission is to promote and encourage greater recognition for Forgotten Australians.

AFA advocates for national policies and high quality services available in each state and territory, which are tailored to meet the needs and interests of the estimated 500,000 Forgotten Australians.

AFA strongly encourages inclusion of Forgotten Australians in service planning and delivery.

AFA raises the profile and identity of Forgotten Australians in the wider community, distinguishing them from other special needs groups and ensures that the lived experience of Forgotten Australians informs relevant policy development and service delivery.

AFA has developed an informative booklet *Forgotten Australians: Supporting survivors of childhood institutional care in Australia*, 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Ed.,[©] and *DVD Life Stories*[©]. These resources are available to assist in professional development and training for community and aged care support services.

AFA has made numerous conference and organisational professional development presentations on the impact of childhood institutionalisation, including for the aged care sector.

To engage an AFA speaker on ageing Forgotten Australians, or for further advice contact.

www.forgottenaustralians.org.au

0488 460 646

Care Leavers Australasia Network

Care Leavers Australasia Network (CLAN) is a national, independent, peak membership body for people who were raised in Australian and New Zealand orphanages, children's homes and foster care. CLAN has been operating since 2000 and has offices in Sydney and Melbourne.

CLAN represents and advocates for Care Leavers at all levels of government. They assist and support members to access medical, dental and community services.

CLAN offers the following services:

- Free telephone or face to face counselling
- Information about the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and how to get involved
- Support Care Leavers to go to the Royal Commission
- Social Events in all states
- Reunion support
- A bi-monthly newsletter, the Clanicle
- Help to obtain your state ward or Home file
- Help to write your personal story
- Free advertising in the CLAN newsletter and on the CLAN website to locate lost family members or Home friends
- Photo gallery for Care Leaver Members only
- The only place in Australia you can have your story published in the Clanicle
- Advocacy and lobbying Care Leaver issues in all states.

CLAN is also a research and training service, with experienced speakers available to do talks and presentations on the traumatic legacy of being a Care Leaver and how their childhood has affected their adult life.

www.clan.org.au

1800 008 774

For Former Child Migrants

The International Association of Former Child Migrants and their Families

The International Association of Former Child Migrants and their Families was launched in October 1997 to provide Former Child Migrants around the world with an organisation run by child migrants, for child migrants. The association represents the views and feelings of Former Child Migrants and their families by campaigning for justice and appropriate services, and by taking part in relevant events like the International Conference on Child Migration, Parliamentary Inquiries and political apologies.

www.childmigrantstrust.com/intl-association

Child Migrants Trust

The Child Migrants Trust (CMT) is an independent, international social work agency that helps Former Child Migrants and their families. CMT has offices in the UK and Australia. It provides counselling services related to personal and family identity, and from its Nottingham office undertakes family tracing to help Former Child Migrants reunite with their families. CMT also provides counselling to address historic childhood abuse and helps Former Child Migrants to develop a better understanding about their past so that they can enjoy a better future.

www.childmigrantstrust.com

Find & Connect Services

The Australian Government has set up a national network of Find & Connect support services to provide personalised support that is respectful and understanding of the experiences of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants. The support services help Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants to:

- access personalised support and counselling
- obtain personal records, trace their history and assist to understand why they were placed into care as children
- connect with other services and support networks that may assist
- reconnect with family, where possible.

To contact the Find & Connect support service in your state or territory freecall **1800 16 11 09** (please note that calls made from mobile phones may incur additional costs).

The support services in each state and territory are:

- New South Wales and the Australia Capital Territory – Wattle Place
- Northern Territory – Relationships Australia NT
- Queensland – Lotus Place
- South Australia – Relationships Australia SA
- Tasmania – Relationships Australia TAS
- Victoria – Open Place
- Western Australia – Lanterns
- Nationally – Child Migrants Trust.

For Stolen Generations

National Stolen Generations Alliance

The Australian Government's 2008 apology marked a new beginning with truth, justice and healing as the guiding principles. The National Stolen Generations Alliance (NSGA) sees the removal of Aboriginal children as not just an Aboriginal problem, but one which has negatively affected all Australian citizens and one that requires a collective response to heal not just those affected but the whole nation. The NSGA–Australians for Truth, Justice and Healing was formed as an independent, national organisation in 2007. Its vision is to enable truth, justice, healing and empowerment for Stolen Generations and their descendants. The NSGA advocates on behalf of people from Stolen Generations to government and non-government agencies to ensure better services and for social justice, to make sure their voices are heard and their rights and interests addressed. It also works closely with people from Stolen Generations as they make their journey home to their families and communities.

www.nsga.org.au

Link-Up Services

Link-Up organisations can be found throughout Australia and provide a range of services to members of Stolen Generations, their families, and foster and adoptive families, including:

- researching family and personal records
- emotional support when accessing family and personal records
- finding family members
- assistance and support at family reunions
- support and counselling before, during and after family reunion.

Further information and contact details can be found at www.aiatsis.gov.au/research/finding-your-family/link-services
1800 624 332

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation works with Indigenous organisations and communities to address the trauma associated with past government policies of forced removal of children from their families. It funds culturally strong, community based healing programs to address the effects of trauma, training and education initiatives that build the skills of communities and workers to deal with trauma and research into the benefits of Indigenous healing.

The Foundation has developed a working partnership with the National Stolen Generation Alliance and Link-Up family reunification services.

www.healingfoundation.org.au
(02) 6124 4400

www.health.gov.au