

FORGOTTEN AUSTRALIANS

Senate Community Affairs
Committee

Introduction

- The Historical Abuse Network has been formed following the Forde Inquiry in 1999.
- HAN congratulates the Australian Government in directing the Senate Community Affairs Committee to re look at the Recommendations of the Senate Reports Lost Innocents and Forgotten Australians

Expectations and Hope

- HAN members as did many Forgotten Australians across the Nation had great expectations when the Senate Report was presented to Parliament.
- The Government of the day response and the ALP as opposition was inadequate and devastating to Forgotten Australians.
- It was with great relief that with a new government the recommendations are once again to be examined

Statement of Acknowledgement and Apology

- The Historical Abuse Network is very disappointed that there has been no progress on these recommendations
- HAN advocates that the Australian Parliament both acknowledge that abuses did occur whilst people were in church and state care of the states and apologise for the harm and distress suffered on behalf of the nation

Statement of Acknowledgment and Apology

- HAN acknowledges that churches have compiled apologies but have not been public enough in delivery of these apologies within the community
- HAN knows many people who do not know about what the churches have done and have never received an apology

Addressing legal barriers

- No progress on these matters
- HAN would advocate that the Australian Government consider taking leadership in advocating and supporting State jurisdictions to have a national approach to ensuring that the legal status of religious institutions does not prevent such institutions from being accountable and for all states to review their statute of limitations laws acknowledging more realistic timeframes for victims of abuse to report their crimes

National Reparation Fund

- HAN acknowledges that this recommendation needs to be reviewed in the light of the Redress Schemes which have been implemented by the States. (Not all people in out of home care across the country have been able to access schemes. eg in Qld Foster care was not included)
- HAN strongly supports the formation of a fund to which churches and government contribute and administer through one central access point.

Internal Church Redress Process

- HAN position is that current internal church processes are inadequate and unfair.
- There are no benchmarks or standards in relation to best practices of internal complaints mechanisms.
- Churches remain unaccountable as the internal redress process remain a secret and are not reported on publicly in a appropriate manner.
- The process need to be made more public to ensure accessibility and accountability

Church Redress Process

- HAN believes that the churches as significant institutions in society should have to report about the complaints, internal processes and outcomes annually to a appropriate statutory external body. There has been no progress on these matters.
- HAN would advocate for the Senate Committee to provide information to the Human Rights Commission as evidence of the significant human rights violations which have occurred to children whilst in church and state care, and the limitations of internal government and church process in relation to Redress
- HAN members would acknowledge that Redress should be managed by an external party to government.(the courts)

Royal Commission

- There are different perspectives by HAN members about whether or not a Royal Commission would be able to bring about the justice and healing that people are seeking
- Those in favor believe a Royal Commission would be able to access records and have greater powers of investigation within churches and the state governments, thus making recommendations and findings that would force governments and churches to action

Royal Commission

- Those against are concerned about the expense of a Commission and that it would once again be yet another report that is not responded to by governments
- Concern also about the how many people are getting older and want action by government sooner rather than later

Commissioner for Children

- HAN acknowledges that many states do have Commissioner for children and young people and supports this as a preventative measure for children today
- HAN would like to see a FORGOTTEN AUSTRALIANS Commissioner within the Human Rights and Opportunity Commission to continue to have public hearings and place on public record the accounts of abuse and neglect by people who as children were placed in institutions, group homes foster care and detention centers

Location, preservation recording and access to records

- HAN acknowledges that some churches and governments have improved access but many still have problems accessing information about their family or siblings even after they have deceased due the policy of blocking out information about others. HAN would like these policies changed to accommodate changes once a person has deceased.

Advocacy and Support Services

- HAN would like to place on public record that the churches in QLD do not contribute to the on going provision of services . Counselling is only paid on an individual basis when processing a complaint.
- HAN would recommend that the Australian government fund advocacy services to assist people in all states to process their complaints to government, church and community organisations who are responsible for children in care and report to a Human Rights Forgotten Australian Commissioner if one where to be created.

Advocacy

- HAN would also advocate for advocacy services for parents within the child protection system to be funded by the Commonwealth as independent to the States who operate the child protection system. Parents who were in care themselves especially feel that they are discriminated against and unable to address the power issues due to their own childhood experiences.

Citizen Advocacy

- HAN members seek within any response by governments funding for programs that facilitate the participation of Forgotten Australians as citizens in raising awareness of our experiences and ensuring the inclusion of Forgotten Australians in services and community life today.

Provision of Support Services

HAN advocates for services to

- People who were in care as well as their families
- Sufficient funding to match demand for services
- Centre based and outreach to communities across the State and Nation
- Services to guide people through what entitlements, opportunities and services are available to people
- Services need to be long term and provide a mix of services in recognition of the diversity of the population.

Healthcare, Housing and Aged Care Programs

- The inclusion and access of Forgotten Australians to healthcare, housing and aged care services is a high priority for HAN members
- HAN members advocate for a system within government services that recognizes Forgotten Australians experiences of trauma and abuse and its impact on our healthcare, housing and aged care needs. Many are fearful of a return to institutional care as older Australians
- HAN would request the Senate Committee to explore a system for Forgotten Australians that provides priority access.

Aged Care Innovation Pool

- This recommendation has not been progressed. HAN would advocate that recommendation 26 in relation to funding an innovative model of aged care service be progressed

Housing and Homelessness

- HAN supports the recommendation in relation to data collection
- HAN members would like to see innovative housing models that provide support and housing to people be available to Forgotten Australians
- Greater Advocacy within homelessness response about the needs of Forgotten Australians.

Whole of Government Response

- HAN understands the need for a whole of government response but such a response needs to fund the participation of Forgotten Australians in the dialogue, and evaluation, planning

Memorials, exhibitions, Oral History

- HAN support all these recommendations and advocates for the inclusion of developing heritage centers in combination with the provision of services,

Research, Tertiary Study Courses

- HAN supports these recommendation but advocates for the inclusion of Forgotten Australians in the initiatives.
- HAN advocates that the needs of Forgotten Australians are not confused with the issues of current child protection systems. Both need attention and Forgotten Australians have a contribution to make to both,