

# Senate inquiry into the implementation of the recommendation of the Forgotten Australians: *A Report on Australians institutionalized as children.*

Senate Affairs Reference Committee

Submission

Garry Harrison 10<sup>th</sup> December 2008

As a Forgotten Australian I write this submission, without the backing of any of the advocate groups.

I had made a written submission in 2003 to be read by the Senate Community References Committee 2003. I am a member of Vanish and do not represent their views.

## **1. Report and Outcomes**

The timing of the report which was tabled in the Senate could not have been at a worse time, with the announcement of an election by the Federal Government; the report had been overshadowed either through good fortune by the then Governments part, or purely an accidental happening.

The Government of the day having had more pressing things on hand, the report was ignored by them as the oncoming election was more important it seemed. Although it was groundbreaking it had gathered evidence from those that were placed in care. Issues were identified by the Committee, the raising of children where fear was the predominant message. 39 recommendations were handed down by the committee to date only two of these in the state of Victoria and N.S.W. have been met. It does need to be noted one of the key recommendations Number 2

*'That all State Governments and Churches and agencies, that have not already done so, issue formal statements acknowledging their role in the administration of institutional care arrangements; and apologising for the physical, psychological and social harm caused to the children, and the hurt and distress suffered by the children at the hands of those who were in charge of them, particularly the children who were victims of abuse and assault' (Chapter 7, 7.111).*

It would be fair to say that there has been contrasting reactions to this recommendation including a rather dismal reply from the Federal Government which does by its own definition have duty of care to the territories '*...this is a matter for state and territory governments, churches and agencies to consider*' (SCARC 2005a: p. 2).

I would argue the lack of leadership by the present administration has reduced the effect of these recommendations across Australia.

### **What should happen?**

The Forgotten Australians report is a damning document on the past practices of children placed in institutional care. The Federal Government needs to take a positive stand on the issues raised, and the recommendations handed down by the Senate. 39 Senators sat on that committee it seems a shame for a government to allow an inquiry to be heard at the taxpayers expense only to be told at the end the day '*[t]his is a matter for state and territory governments, churches and agencies to consider*' (SCARC 2005a: p. 2).

### **Elements that need to be put in place**

- Apology from the Federal Government
- Apology from the NSW, Victorian, NT Governments
- Gold Card
- Dental and Health Care
- Funeral Expenses
- Education
- Affordable Housing
- Basic Life Skills
- Compensation