

The Healing Way for Forgotten

Australians Inc.

"Our heroes are in our stories told"

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31st January, 2009

Dear Senator Moore,

**Re: Inquiry into the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Lost
Innocents and Forgotten Australians Reports**

Please find attached our submission to your inquiry. We would be pleased to answer any questions or provide any further information required by the Committee. In our endeavours to start the healing process for trauma recovery with a large group of people from institutional care backgrounds we can see the need for workshops and retreats to cater for our special needs.

As a group in the healing area we wish to support the Towards Healing process as well as the government processes by offering our advocacy to the individuals going through the process and afterwards in the offering of workshops. These workshops will bring people into contact with other "Forgotten Australians" who can relate to each other in a supportive, safe environment. The workshops will attend to the issues in regard to frustration, anger and trust. Your support in this area would help many Forgotten Australians and their families to move on with practical tools to use to bring about a more rewarding life.

Regards

Mary Brownlee nee Corry

Lawrie Higgins

Founding Members

Inquiry into the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Lost Innocents and Forgotten Australians Reports

Senate Affairs Reference Committee
Submission
The Healing Way for Forgotten Australians Inc.

31st January, 2009

“Our heroes are in our stories told”

“Trauma can be hell on earth; transformed it is a divine gift.” Peter Levine

As Forgotten Australians and Child Migrants we have been doing this through our own merits and now we need to implement our progressive healing workshops and retreats with more support.

This support could be actioned by facilities already available at State and Church levels. Space and utilities would be a valuable resource for our workshops and retreats.

Recommendation1

7.110 That the Commonwealth Government issue a formal statement acknowledging, on behalf of the nation, the hurt and distress suffered by many children in institutional care, particularly the children who were victims of abuse and assault; and apologising for the harm caused to these children.

Response

This above recommendation is a powerful one to be implemented in order to promote the commonwealth as a nation, to heal. This recommendation needs to be implemented as soon as possible so that Forgotten Australians can be connected and welcomed back into their communities. This recommendation should be implemented by local members in local areas as a healing tool. As there was a home in every town and village where Forgotten Australians were taken to be isolated behind walls of institutions there should be an acknowledgement on this micro level of society in order to educate communities to facilitate a welcoming back of the citizenship that was lost. Local members as the Federal representative of our national

government should be happy and proud to welcome Forgotten Australians back into their own society to make the community more whole.

Forgotten Australians seek a national acknowledgement and a national apology from the Commonwealth Government for the torture, sexual, physical, emotional and spiritual abuses they suffered. Acknowledgement of areas such as neglect, slavery as well as isolation, malnutrition and disbelief when requiring an understanding from their families and friends will promote healing further. We desperately need an acknowledgement from our community and social leaders as part of the healing process. All of these areas need to be acknowledged in a national apology focussing on the abuses suffered so that healing may start to take place from all sides.

Recommendation2

7.111 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.

Response

The Healing Way for Forgotten Australians Inc. Founding member Mary Brownlee nee Corry approached her local member in August 2008 and sort from him information regarding the implementation of the Senate Community Affairs Committee's report – *Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children*. The Hon G J West, MP Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Sport and Recreation and the Member for Campbelltown acknowledged in a letter the NSW Government's response to the recommendations. This letter was sent to Mr West from the Minister for Community Services Kevin Greene MP on 5th August, 2008. In the second paragraph it was stated:

As recommended by the Senate Committee, on 23 June 2005, the former Minister for Community Services, the Hon Reba Meagher MP, provided an apology in the NSW Parliament to those who suffered physical, psychological or social harm or distress as a result of their experiences in care. In taking this action, the Government recognised that an apology is an important step in the journey of healing for people who suffered neglect or abuse in care. A copy of the Minister's statement is attached (Letter 5.8.2008, p. 1)¹

As a healing group The Healing Way for Forgotten Australians Inc. acknowledges this apology with disappointment. We are aware that two representatives from CLAN were invited to attend the apology; no other groups seem to be made aware that an official apology would take place. This is an area of disappointment for all of our groups healing endeavours.

We reflect as a healing group on the powerful words used in the context of healing for the needs of a group of people known as the Forgotten Australians. Powerful knowledge is the beginning of the healing for all parties. The following on of true healing actions are the fruit of this acquired knowledge. This is reflected in this apology yet we find as a healing group that the movements towards healing for all parties need to be actioned in a mindful and respectable way.

These true healing actions are an imperative movement forward in this acknowledgement stated on the floor of State Parliament in 2005. This not only helps the individual but his or

¹ Minister for Community Services, Kevin Greene MP, letter 5th August, 2008.

her family system to connect to each family member. This true healing action connects the individual to his or her own community. This also helps other parties such as State Governments, Churches and Agencies to understand the magnitude of Forgotten Australians issues and the necessary responses needed from these bodies. These responses are the implementation of healing workshops as well as liaising with all parties. This will help to achieve a focussed healing avenue in a productive and economical way for stake holders. This apology has a powerful place in regard to the actions that need to accompany every word for healing. This apology is as follows:

NSW PARLIAMENT – 23 JUNE 2005

The Government of New south Wales apologises for any physical, psychological and social harm cased to the children, and any hurt and distress experienced by them while in the care of the State. We make this apology in the hope that it may help the process of healing.

The New South Wales Government is strongly committed to supporting families to reduce the need for children to be in care. Where children and young people are placed in care, the Government will assist with the services available to them.

We hope that this apology will be accepted in the spirit in which it is made and that the New South Wales Government, our community partners and the community at large can continue to work together to build a better and safer place in which our children can live, grow and flourish. We know we need to listen to these people and work with them to make this a reality.

I thank the House for the opportunity to make this important and much overdue statement. I hope this apology, along wit the other measures that I have outlined today, will help bring healing and help to those young Australians who, at a vulnerable time in their lives, were let down by the system.

Reba Meagher MP
Minister for Community Services
Minister for Youth

As a healing group passionate about our work we have actioned our objectives by liaising and educating State Governments, Church and agencies regarding healing workshops. In January 2009 we liaised with the MICA project Queensland in regard to facilitating workshops specifically tailored for Forgotten Australians issues. We were accepted to provide our experience and knowledge in this area and this will occur in March 2009. Mary Brownlee nee Corry has recently supported the Towards Healing Catholic process and was asked to submit more information about the healing and advocacy processes for the group The Healing Way for Forgotten Australians Inc. We now release for this submission the philosophy, aims and objectives that are the values we hold for our peoples healing. They are as follows:

PHILOSOPHY

We honour the courage and resilience of the Human Spirit in its ability to overcome childhood pain and trauma. We believe in empowering individuals in their journey towards self awareness, personal growth and inner peace. We seek to foster a sense of belonging that we believe helps to create a healthier community.

AIMS

- To educate the community concerning the impact of growing up within the Child Welfare System.
- To foster a safe environment where members can gather and where they feel validated and valued.
- To empower the individual on their personal journey towards healing and to strive towards reaching their full potential.
- Where possible to provide practical support.
- To nurture a sense of belonging and friendship.
- To work with past providers where possible in order to build bridges towards a healthier happier community.

OBJECTIVES

- To provide community education by developing workshops and training programmes for both counsellors and those who work or study in the welfare sector.
- To develop tailored workshops for healing emotional trauma for Forgotten Australians.
- To increase public awareness of the post war child welfare system, its historical relevance and its impact upon those who grew up within it.
- To provide a physical, emotional and psychological safe space where members may meet to talk about and work through issues.
- To empower members in their personal journey in healing from past trauma through telephone support and counselling, information and resources on relevant issues and services available in the community, practical support such as court support and guidance, assistance with the process of accessing files, support where possible to visit past institutions self discovery etc.
- To provide social events and activities that foster a sense of belonging and connection to the community.
- To build networks where possible with past care providers, relevant service agencies and government bodies.

As a healing group we recognise the difficulties that all parties share in coming together in a unified approach with harmony. Therefore as a healing group specifically set up for this venture in healing, we are experts in our field. The sharing of this knowledge to all parties allows each of them to move on. This is why we have moved forward towards the Catholic Church in order to support their processes where our people are the main stake holders.

We sincerely wish to make sure that our people the Forgotten Australians are not re-traumatized in the process while healing starts to unfold. Trust is the key to this process coming to its own fulfilment and this is where we can place our group and allow our people to feel safe and secure while the process unfolds. Nurturing trust on both sides is our key method and approach.

As a healing group we have approached the Catholic Church's Towards Healing process to provide advocacy in the support mechanisms they already have in place. After this, workshops and retreats are imperative as part of the package for later support and bonding. Our people need to connect and heal together. During the process re-traumatization is a reality that we need to address. This is one of our main areas of expertise. Peter Levine the author of "Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma" an expert in his field explains trauma as:

Trauma is an internal straitjacket created when a devastating moment is frozen in time. It stifles the unfolding of being, strangling our attempts to move forward with our lives. It disconnects us from ourselves, others, nature and spirit. When people are overwhelmed by threat, we are frozen in fear. It is as if our instinctive survival energies are "all dressed up with no place to go."²

Peter Levine

Peter Levine tells us that "Trauma can be hell on earth; transformed, it is a divine gift." This is where we all need to go with our Forgotten Australians. We all need to give these people hope to transform their lives into their potentials for happy and fruitful living.

We have asked for and received support in regard to space, utilities and community efforts that will educate and acknowledge our needs. We have actioned this approached with Lotus Place, Brisbane as a State Government body and also The Towards Healing Catholic Process. We wish to be able to utilize what resources are already in place to fulfil the further needs of our people.

Community effort is also an area in which we as a healing group wish to address. As a teacher I would like to see students throughout the school system being utilized in the capacity of community service. This is a part of their curriculum activities in regard to a certain amount of hours in voluntary service. This will also educate students in the important area of Australia history while sharing in the healing experiences of Forgotten Australians. These students could be utilized in workshops and retreats for community service and voluntary work. Some of these students could also identify as children and grandchildren of Forgotten Australians as 1 in 5 are related to Forgotten Australians. This in itself would be a powerful healing avenue for our youth of Australia.

Chapter 8

Addressing legal barriers

Recommendation 3

8.67 That State Governments review the effectiveness of the South Australian law and consider amending their own statutes of limitation legislation to achieve the positive outcomes for conducting legal proceedings that have resulted from the amendments in the South Australian jurisdiction.

Recommendation 4

8.68 That in recognising the difficulty that applicants have in taking civil action against unincorporated religious or charitable organisations, the Government examine whether it would be either an appropriate or a feasible incentive to incorporation, to make the availability of federal tax concessions to charitable, religious and not-for-profit organisations dependent on, or alternatively linked to, them being incorporated under the corporations act or under state incorporated associations statutes.

Recommendation 5

8.69 That the Commonwealth Government examine the desirability and feasibility of introducing whistleblower legislation for the not-for-profit religious and charitable sectors.

² Levine, P. (1997). *Waking the Tiger*, Berkeley: North Atlantic Books.

National reparation fund

Recommendation 6

8.125 That the Commonwealth Government establish and manage a national reparations fund for victims of institutional abuse in institutions and out-of-home care settings and that:

- the scheme be funded by contributions from the Commonwealth and State Governments and the Churches and agencies proportionately;
- the Commonwealth have regard to the schemes already in operation in Canada, Ireland and Tasmania in the design and implementation of the above scheme;
- a board be established to administer the scheme, consider claims and award monetary compensation;
- the board, in determining claims, be satisfied that there was a 'reasonable likelihood' that the abuse occurred;
- the board should have regard to whether legal redress has been pursued;
- the processes established in assessing claims be non-adversarial and informal; and
- compensation be provided for individuals who have suffered physical, sexual or emotional abuse while residing in these institutions or out-of-home care settings.

Response

As part of a package to a national reparation fund we wish to see advocacy in redress schemes as well as workshops and retreats for healing. This will address the re-traumatisation of Forgotten Australians during and after these processes.

Internal Church redress processes

Recommendation 7

8.170 That all internal Church and agency-related processes for handling abuse allegations ensure that:

- informal, reconciliation-type processes be available whereby complainants can meet with Church officials to discuss complaints and resolve grievances without recourse to more formal processes, the aim being to promote reconciliation and healing;
- where possible, there be independent input into the appointment of key personnel operating the schemes;
- a full range of support and other services be offered as part of compensation/reparation packages, including monetary compensation;
- terms of settlement do not impose confidentiality clauses on complainants;
- internal review procedures be improved, including the appointment of external appointees independent of the respective Church or agency to conduct reviews; and
- information on complaints procedures is widely disseminated, including on Churches' websites.

Response

As part of a package to a national reparation fund we wish to see advocacy in redress schemes as well as workshops and retreats for healing. This will address the re-traumatisation of Forgotten Australians during and after these processes.

As a healing group we have approached the Catholic Church's Towards Healing process to provide advocacy in the support mechanisms they already have in place. After this, workshops and retreats are imperative as part of the package for later support and bonding. Our people need to connect and heal together. During the process re-traumatisation is a reality that we need to address and support workshops and retreats will address this issue. This is one of our main areas of expertise.

Recommendation 8

8.171 That the Commonwealth establish an external complaints review mechanism, such as a national commissioner for children and young people who would have the power to:

- investigate and mediate complaints received by complainants dissatisfied with Church processes with the relevant Church authority;
- review the operations of Church sponsored complaints mechanisms to enhance transparency and accountability;
- report annually to the Parliament on the operation of the Churches' complaints schemes, including data on the number and nature of complaints; and
- publicise the existence of Church-sponsored complaints mechanisms widely throughout the community.

Recommendation 9

8.172 That the Churches and agencies publish comprehensive data on all abuse complaints received to date, and then subsequently on an annual basis, and that this information include:

- numbers of complainants and type of complaints received;
- numbers of Church/agency personnel involved in complaint allegations; and
- amounts of compensation paid to complainants

Recommendation 10

8.173 That information on the above matters be provided annually (including any reasons for non-compliance) to the national commissioner for publication in a consolidated form in the commissioner's annual report.

Royal Commission

Recommendation 11

8.223 That the Commonwealth Government seek a means to require all charitable and church-run institutions and out-of-home care facilities to open their files and premises and provide full cooperation to authorities to investigate the nature and extent within these institutions of criminal physical assault, including assault leading to death, and criminal sexual assault, and to establish and report on concealment of past criminal practices or of persons known, suspected or alleged to have committed crimes against children in their care, by the relevant authorities, charities and/or Church organisations;

And if the requisite full cooperation is not received, and failing full access and investigation as required above being commenced within six months of this Report's tabling, that the Commonwealth Government then, following consultation with state and territory governments, consider establishing a Royal Commission into State, charitable, and church-run institutions and out-of-home care during the last century, provided that the Royal Commission:

- be of a short duration not exceeding 18 months, and be designed to bring closure to this issue, as far as that is possible; and
- be narrowly conceived so as to focus within these institutions, on
- the nature and extent of criminal physical assault of children and young persons, including assault leading to death;
- criminal sexual assault of children and young persons;
- and any concealment of past criminal practices or of persons known, suspected or alleged to have committed crimes against children in their care, by the relevant State authorities, charities and/or Church organisations.

Response

While investigating the nature and extent within these institutions of criminal physical assault our people need to tell their stories. This is an important part of the process yet it will re-traumatise Forgotten Australians who are suffering from PTSD and mental illness. Therefore this area needs to be given much respect and responsibility to make sure that our people do not suffer more in the seeking of knowledge. This process needs to be carefully monitored when stories are being accessed for reports and oral histories. As a healing group we are concerned in the present that re-traumatisation is taking place in many processes.

Chapter 9

Location, preservation, recording and access to records

Recommendation 12

9.113 That government and non-government agencies holding records relating to care leavers, implement and fund, as a matter of priority, programs to find, identify and preserve records including photographs and other memorabilia.

Response

Healing that takes place when people connect to their records and then go further to find their families is profound. History groups needs to be educated about Forgotten Australians issues and stories.

Recommendation 13

9.114 That all government and non-government agencies immediately cease the practice of destroying records relating to those who have been in care.

Response

Healing that takes place when people connect to their records and then go further to find their families is profound. History groups needs to be educated about Forgotten Australians issues and stories.

Recommendation 14

9.115 That all State Governments and non-government agencies, which have not already done so

- provide dedicated services and officers to assist care leavers in locating and accessing records, both government and non-government; and
- compile directories to assist in the locating and accessing of records relating to care leavers and the institutions into which they had been placed.

Response

Healing that takes place when people connect to their records and then go further to find their families is profound. History groups needs to be educated about Forgotten Australians issues and stories.

Recommendation 15

9.116 That a dedicated information and search service be established in each State and Territory to:

- develop a complete register of all records held by government and non-government agencies;
- provide assistance to care leavers to locate and access records;
- provide advocacy and mediation services to care leavers accessing records; and
- ensure that all agencies holding records identify, preserve and make available all surviving records relating to care leavers and the institutions that housed them.

Response

Healing that takes place when people connect to their records and then go further to find their families is profound. History groups needs to be educated about Forgotten Australians issues and stories.

Recommendation 16

9.117 That all government and non-government agencies agree on access guidelines for the records of all care leavers and that the guidelines incorporate the following:

- the right of every care leaver, upon proof of identity only, to view all information relating to himself or herself and to receive a full copy of the same;
- the right of every care leaver to undertake records searches, to be provided with records and the copying of records free of charge;
- the commitment to a maximum time period, agreed by the agencies, for the processing of applications for viewing records; and
- the commitment to the flexible and compassionate interpretation of privacy legislation to allow a care leaver to identify their family and background.

Response

Healing that takes place when people connect to their records and then go further to find their families is profound. History groups needs to be educated about Forgotten Australians issues and stories.

Connecting to your family system even in an abstract form is powerful healing. This can be achieved with healing workshops in Family Systems Support for healing. The Healing Way for Forgotten Australians have the knowledge and expertise to achieve this approach to healing. The government should insist that these programmes take place in a timely fashion so that individuals and families can find healing.

Recommendation17

9.118 That all agencies, both government and non-government, which provide access to records for care leavers, ensure adequate support and counselling services are provided at the time of viewing records, and if required, subsequent to the viewing of records; and that funding for independent counselling services be provided for those care leavers who do not wish to access services provided by a former care agency.

Response

Re-traumatisation is a growing concern of our group The Healing Way for Forgotten Australians. We have up to date knowledge about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and how to approach a Forgotten Australians needs while viewing records. While viewing is occurring so is the trauma that may have been recorded in these records. Family connection is a paramount area of concern in gathering the family system back together as a whole identity. The person may well need a support advocate present who knows how to connect with the Forgotten Australian who may need to language what they are reading. In this case a connection to the storyteller needs to be addressed in the present moment.

This is an area of expertise that our group can provide as we are experienced Forgotten Australians who have studied the up to date knowledge about PTSD and Mindful Core processes. Safety in this process is the most important thing for Forgotten Australians and this is achieved by working slowly, gently and mindfully. This process works with the core processes of feeling, thinking, moving, internal sensing and external sensing as a way of managing arousal and renegotiating the traumatic experience (McIndoe, 2007). Our group has the skills to work mindfully with our people the Forgotten Australians.

Recommendation18

9.119 That the Commonwealth request the Council of Australian Governments to review all Federal and State and Territory Freedom of Information regimes to ensure that they do not hinder access by care leavers to information about their childhoods and families.

Chapter 10

Advocacy and support groups

Recommendation19

10.58 That the Commonwealth fund a national conference of service providers and advocacy and support groups with the aim being to establish a professional national support and advocacy body for care leavers; and that this body be funded by the Commonwealth and State Governments and the Churches and agencies.

Recommendation20

10.59 That the Commonwealth and State Governments and Churches and agencies provide on-going funding to CLAN and all advocacy and support groups to enable these groups to maintain and extend their services to victims of institutional abuse, and that the government and non-government sectors widely publicise the availability of services offered by these advocacy and support groups.

Response

We would appreciate ongoing funding for our group The Healing Way for Forgotten Australians Inc. and to have access to facilities and utilities as part of a whole package of healing.

Provision of support services**Recommendation 21**

10.77 That all State Governments, Churches and agencies provide a comprehensive range of support services and assistance to care leavers and their families.

Response

By providing individual attention to each Forgotten Australian allows us to access the family trauma that has been passed on. This passing on of family fate has transformed itself over many generations into a generational load that needs healing. Though our experience and study we are experts in this field and have been trained to deal with this very problem that has arisen for attention.

Recommendation22

10.78 That all State Government funded services for care leavers be available to all care leavers in the respective State, irrespective of where the care leaver was institutionalised; and that funding provisions for this arrangement be arranged through the Community and Disability Services Ministerial Council.

Response

Access to our workshops is dependent on what State the person was institutionalized in therefore many interstate Forgotten Australians cannot access the facilities that are available to those who lived in that particular State. This is marginalizing even further the status of Forgotten Australian who cannot seek healing and help in their own community. We wish to have all Forgotten Australians not be dependent on what State he or she is from or what State he or she is living in at the moment.

Counselling services**Recommendation 23**

10.106 That all State Governments, Churches and agencies fund counselling services for care leavers and their families, and that those currently providing counselling services maintain and, where possible, expand their services including to regional areas. The counselling services should include:

- the extension of specialist counselling services that address the particular needs of care leavers;
- their provision to clients on a long-term or as required basis; and

- the provision of external counselling as an option.

Response

The need for current and ongoing counselling services needs to be supported. Those that wish to enter into workshops or retreats should also be made available. The bonding with other Forgotten Australians is a powerful tool for healing and moving forward together in a connected and positive way. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder needs to be addressed fully by the counselling services so that re-traumatising does not interfere with the ongoing healing process. Up to date knowledge in this area needs to be addressed in State Government areas, Churches and other agencies.

Recommendation24

10.107 That specialist higher education courses be available for the training of health professionals in areas related to the particular psychological and psychiatric effects of institutional abuse.

Response

The need for current and ongoing counselling services needs to be supported. Those that wish to enter into workshops or retreats should also be also made available. The bonding with other Forgotten Australians is a powerful tool for healing and moving forward together in a connected and positive way. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder needs to be addressed fully by the counselling services so that re-traumatising does not interfere with the ongoing healing process. Up to date knowledge in this area needs to be addressed in State Government areas, Churches and other agencies.

Health care, housing and aged care programs

Recommendation25

10.133 That the Commonwealth and State Governments in providing funding for health care and in the development of health prevention programs, especially mental health, depression, suicide prevention and drug and alcohol prevention programs, recognise and cater for the health needs and requirements of care leavers.

Recommendation 26

10.134 That the Department of Health and Ageing fund a pilot program under the Aged Care Innovative Pool to test innovative models of aged care services focussing on the specific needs of care leavers.

Response

The wrong diagnoses of our mental state have had a profound effect on the future potential of our people the Forgotten Australians. Often, wrong diagnoses are followed by wrong medications which cause long term effects on mental and physical capacity for healing. Many Forgotten Australian in the past have been damaged further by being wrongly diagnosed in mental illness areas other than Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Many of these medications have been experimental to the detriment of the individual and their family. We are still being forced to comply with old knowledge that is not up to date with the world knowledge in regard to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Many of us do not fall into the normal mental illness areas where strong drugs are being used to this date. Many Forgotten Australians are now damaged by the drugs that were prescribed in the past for mental illness purposes. We now know that many of us suffered from (PTSD) that needed cognitive counselling as well as physical body attention to how the body remembers the abuse and

neglect. In aged care areas Forgotten Australians are reliving again their trauma in institutional care. Institutions that look after ageing Forgotten Australians need to be educated in the backgrounds of their stake holders.

Recommendation 27

10.135 That the Home and Community Care program recognise the particular needs of care leavers; and that information about the program be widely disseminated to care leaver support and advocacy groups in all States.

Response

As a healing group we are aware of this need for support and advocacy groups who know the needs of their own people. Education in areas that unpack the serious issues that Forgotten Australians need to deal with would be a good productive effort for university and TAFE education. A specialty area would be in the training of new carers in health and welfare.

Recommendation 28

10.140 That the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program recognise the particular needs of care leavers; and that:

- data on the usage of the Program by care leavers be collected; and
- information about the Program be widely disseminated to care leaver support and advocacy groups in all States.

Response

Forgotten Australians many with limited funds and limited resources with inadequate skills look to connect permanently to housing provided for shelter. This housing may be the only way a Forgotten Australian can find some sort of equality and security to manage their everyday affairs.

Education

Recommendation 29

10.150 That the Commonwealth and State Governments widely publicise the availability of adult literacy and numeracy services and associated adult education courses to care leavers and care leaver support groups.

Response

Many Forgotten Australians have trouble even entering the buildings where education is provided. This is because of the institutional nature of their care which reminds them of the abusive educational methods that were served up to them. Trauma for some Forgotten Australians was served out 24 hours a day across 7 days of the week. These buildings and the educational setting itself can re-traumatise our people who have special needs relating to the methods used in past experiences. Many need ongoing support and counselling while they are attending to educational needs.

Recommendation 30

10.151 That State Governments investigate options for alternative entry pathways to higher education courses for ex-residents of institutions and their children.

Response

This area needs further and ongoing support. Our children and grand children need a bursary system to support their ongoing generational needs that have not been addressed for

equality purposes. Many Forgotten Australians who are gifted and never been able to realise their full potential do not have equality in our country. This is due to the lack of opportunities to re-educate and then be of service to their community. A bursary system for Forgotten Australian youth and Forgotten Australian mature aged students need to be addressed as an issue for equality

Data collection

Recommendation31

10.159 That the Commonwealth, in conjunction with the States, develop procedures for the collection of data on people who have been in care on forms that are already used to elicit client information such as Medicare and Centrelink forms and admission forms to prisons, mental health care facilities and aged care facilities.

Response

A box to tick saying "Are you a Forgotten Australian" would be a good resource to find our people and give them the support for healing for all support groups.

Recommendation32

10.160 That Commonwealth and State programs across a range of social policy areas, including health and aged care and social welfare services generally, explicitly recognise care leavers as a sub-group with specific requirements in the publications and other material disseminated about programs.

Response

The AFA resource booklet "Forgotten Australians: Supporting survivors of childhood institutional care in Australia" be provided in all areas of welfare, social support and education. This booklet should be updated as some areas of visual literacy and the factual information may be given further address.

Whole of government approach to program and service delivery

Recommendation33

10.164 That the Commonwealth and the States commit, through the Council of Australian Governments, to implementing a whole of government approach to the provision of programs and services for care leavers across policy areas such as health, housing and welfare and community services and other relevant policy areas.

Chapter 11

Recognition through memorials and exhibitions

Recommendation 34

11.46 That the Commonwealth and State Governments, in conjunction with the Churches and agencies, provide funding for the erection of suitable memorials commemorating care leavers. Where possible, memorials could take the form of:

- memorial gardens constructed in conjunction with local councils;
- the placement of plaques at the site of former institutions; and/or
- the construction of heritage centres on the site of former institutions.

The Committee further recommends that the appropriate form and location of memorials should be determined after local consultation with care leavers and their support and advocacy groups.

Response

This recognition through memorials and exhibitions would be a valuable healing tool to bring the history of abuse and neglect into the present. This would allow all the community to recognise what happened locally and to share in the sorrow and sadness that occurred to children in these institutions that were part of each and every community. These memorials could be used as an educational resource for local schools to assist in the educational needs in regard to Australian history. Many institutions could even address their own place in history by utilizing the old buildings and grounds to assist students to visualize what happened in another time in history. This could be by lectures, tours and dramatizations of the happening in that moment in history for educational purpose. This would be a wonderful resource of the shocking occurrences that were part of the story of the creation of our nation.

Recommendation 35

11.47 That the National Museum of Australia be urged to consider establishing an exhibition, preferably permanent, related to the history and experiences of children in institutional care, and that such an exhibition have the capacity to tour as a travelling exhibition.

Response

The historical value of such an educational resource would enhance the healing process for the nation. Our own families would be connected to our stories through this avenue and resource. As of now many Forgotten Australians have not found any healing due to not being witnessed by a verbal story attending to our traumatic past. The issues that our loved ones have had to deal with would be verified fully by this educational resource.

Oral histories

Recommendation 36

11.48 That the Commonwealth Government provide funding for the National Library of Australia to undertake an oral history project to collect the life-stories of former residents in institutional and out-of-home care.

Response

These stories are powerful stories of neglect and abuse that would be a valuable resource that we may never again be able to record if we do not attend to this area soon. The concern of this healing group is to the attention to the re-traumatisation that could occur while these stories are being taken. The trauma needs to be addressed while the story is being given. A mindful approach is needed to connect directly to the storyteller as the story is unfolding. Our group have experience in taking oral histories without re-traumatising the Forgotten Australia and their loved ones.

Research

Recommendation 37

11.49 That the Commonwealth Government fund research either through the Australian Institute of Family Studies or other relevant research body or university into the following areas:

- historical research into institutional care, including the role of institutional care in Australia's social history; the history of institutions and the commissioning of personal histories of former residents;
- the social and economic impact and cost of institutional care; and
- inter-disciplinary research into the relationship between child welfare/child protection and areas such as welfare dependency, social problems such as drug and alcohol abuse and family relationship breakdowns.

Response

Healing is the key to be able to educate professional areas about the impacts of abuse and neglect to the magnitude that has been suffered by Forgotten Australians. It would be a sin not to address this recommendation in a timely way in order to capture the stories and experiences that a group of survivors in Australia have had to deal with. After such experiences the only way for us Forgotten Australians to move forward is the knowledge that we can change many things that have disgusted and disturbed our inner growth and outer wellbeing. Also the lack of knowledge by Forgotten Australians about those who have moved on contributes to their confidence to want to move on themselves. We know that we need heroes to move on. Our heroes are in our stories told.

Recommendation38

11.50 That the Australian Institute of Family Studies National Child Protection Clearinghouse be funded by the Commonwealth Government to collect publications related to historical studies of institutional and other forms of out-of-home care and that this information be widely disseminated.

Tertiary study courses

Recommendation39

11.51 That the Commonwealth, in co-operation with State Governments, establish courses of study at selected tertiary institutions that focus on child protection and related issues, especially early childhood and family studies, psychology, conflict management, the impact of institutional care and social policy to address issues in these areas.

Response

As Forgotten Australians in this healing area we have great knowledge about the issues we face as a group who are becoming more empowered everyday. We will go forward quickly once we are recognised for the theme of survival we have faced together. Many of us will become empowered to be able to educate about our stories and change many areas that we are passionate to change. The knowledge we have within us and our group surpasses the knowledge in theory that has been perceived to be accurate. Some of this theory has been found to be wanting through our own survival in these traumatic experiences that have been a theme across institutions. Some of us are really healthy after what we have endured and the question has to be asked, how is this so? Our powerful stories of survival in extreme conditions could be an educational tool for the many areas and disciplines such as psychology, early childhood and family studies for future knowledge.