



**The Hon Jenny Macklin MP  
Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services  
and Indigenous Affairs**

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CANBERRA ACT 2600*

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MC09-020150

Mrs Julia Irwin MP  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Petitions  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mrs Irwin *Julia*

Thank you for your letter of 19 August 2009 about a petition submitted to the Standing Committee on Petitions about the Forgotten Australians.

The petition calls for the Australian Government to acknowledge the suffering experienced by children in institutional or other out-of-home care and to apologise to Forgotten Australians. The Government has undertaken to deliver such an acknowledgement and apology. This apology will acknowledge the trauma that past care leavers continue to experience and ensure that a crucial and largely invisible part of Australia's social history has now been firmly put on the record.

The Government acknowledges that the suffering experienced by many children in institutional or other out-of-home care during the last century was unacceptable and is committed to making a genuine difference in the lives of those affected and their families. This means acknowledging their tragic experiences, recognising them as survivors and ensuring that this history is never repeated.

This significant step in the healing process for those who suffered abuse and neglect while in out-of-home care will be delivered in 2009. It will reinforce that accounts of what happened are true, that what happened was wrong and that it was very damaging. I also understand that this acknowledgment must be accompanied by other positive measures to ensure it is not merely an empty gesture.

To make sure that care leavers get the practical support and information they need, particularly during this emotional time, the Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA) will receive \$300,000 to engage with the Government and community sectors on a national level.

The Government also recognises the important work of the Care Leavers Australia Network (CLAN) and is providing this organisation with \$300,000 to support the people who lived through this experience. Both these organisations are working with the Government to ensure that the apology is appropriate.

Understanding that a healing process also requires lasting recognition of this history, public awareness and education, the Government is working with the National Library of Australia and the National Museum of Australia to document what happened. These history projects will provide a lasting depiction of institutional and out-of-home care over the last century.

Thank you again for providing me with this petition.

Yours sincerely

**JENNY MACKLIN MP**