

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
FAMILIES, HOUSING, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND
INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO
2011-12 Additional Estimates Hearings

Outcome Number: 1

Question No: 110

Topic: Forgotten Australians

Hansard Page: 16/02/2012 - CA24

Senator Siewert asked:

Please provide feedback on each of the actions that have been taken in terms of the implementation of the package that the Government announced for Forgotten Australians and former child migrants.

Answer:

As part of the National Apology to the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants on 16 November 2009, the Australian Government announced \$26.5 million over four years would be invested in a range of Find and Connect services for Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants.

1. Funding for advocacy organisations

The Care Leavers Australia Network (CLAN) has been funded to expand its counselling services and strengthen its national advocacy role on behalf of Forgotten Australians.

The Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA) has been funded to continue its advocacy work and expand its national Ambassador program. This program will educate service providers and the wider community about the history of Forgotten Australians, with an emphasis on the specific needs of care leavers as they age.

The International Association of Former Child Migrants and their Families has been funded to support its information sharing and social connections program for Former Child Migrants.

2. Find and Connect services

The Child Migrants Trust has been funded to expand its outreach as the national provider of Find and Connect services for Former Child Migrants. The Trust is also developing a staff training manual and induction package.

Following the unsuccessful outcome of the tender in January 2011 for a single provider or consortia to operate a National Find and Connect service, FaHCSIA undertook extensive consultations with advocacy groups, service providers and state and territory governments to develop an approach which reflected lessons learned from the initial scoping and tender process. These consultations supported an approach for implementing a suite of Find and Connect projects and services which builds on existing Commonwealth and state-funded

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ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
FAMILIES, HOUSING, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND
INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO
2011-12 Additional Estimates Hearings

services for Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants, and addresses gaps in policy and service responses.

The COAG Standing Council on Community, Housing and Disability Services agreed on 21 October 2011 that the Commonwealth would bilaterally negotiate high level memoranda of understanding with each state and territory to ensure that Find and Connect funds complemented existing investment by jurisdictions, and avoided any duplication of services. The Commonwealth will directly fund specialist services for Forgotten Australians as part of the development of the suite of Find and Connect services in each jurisdiction.

Expressions of interest were sought on 31 January 2012 for a provider in each jurisdiction to submit a proposal to establish Find and Connect services that include a 1800 entry point; specialist records tracing and supported records release services; specialist counselling services to promote recovery from past trauma and the restoration of family relationships where possible; and outreach services to engage Forgotten Australians where they now live. Applications were due to FaHCSIA on 27 February and will be assessed with a view to rolling out services from April 2012.

The South Australian Government signed its memorandum of understanding with the Commonwealth on 9 February 2012. The Commonwealth aims to have all memoranda of understanding in place by April 2012, and funding agreements in place with service providers in each jurisdiction by June 2012.

3. Access to records projects

3.1 National Find and Connect web resource

The University of Melbourne has been funded to develop a national Find and Connect web resource. This is a searchable database with information about the record holdings of institutions which provided 'care' during the 20th century. The web resource is an entry point to assist care leavers identify their institutions' record holdings, as well as assist with their understanding of the context surrounding their placement in 'care'. It also provides information about support services for care leavers. Minister Macklin launched the web resource on 15 November 2011 (www.findandconnect.gov.au).

At 31 December 2011, there were 6,537 records (entities, published resources, digital objects or archival resources) on the web resource. Of the 5,766 visits to the web resource between 1 November to 31 December 2011, 68.85 per cent were new visits.

The information contained in the web resource will continue to be developed through the input of care leavers, and research undertaken by historians based in each state and territory cataloguing children's Homes, identifying where and what records are held and how they may accessed.

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
FAMILIES, HOUSING, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND
INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO
2011-12 Additional Estimates Hearings

3.2 Access to records for care leavers

A specialist consultancy was undertaken by Recordkeeping Innovation to identify options to improve approaches across state and territory jurisdictions to increase Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants access to their personal records. Recordkeeping Innovation undertook desktop research and interviews with key stakeholders to inform this work. Stakeholders included state and territory governments; privacy and information commissioners; Ombudsmen; registrars of births, deaths and marriages; current and past providers; and advocacy organisations. The project report was received by FaHCSIA on 24 November 2011 and an action plan is being developed in response to its recommendations.

3.3 Records Access Documentation project

Records are essential to assist Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants trace their identities and families. The progress on indexing of records held by past providers varies, and many past providers need assistance to make their records more easily available. The Records Access Documentation Project will focus on records of highest value to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants in finding proof of their identity and evidence about their time in 'care'.

The project will provide grants of up to \$15,000 to assist non-government past providers who hold care leaver records to create indexes and release their records to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants. Applications will be sought in early March 2012, and applications for funding under this project will be assessed by an assessment panel which will include archiving experts.

4. National history projects

The Australian Government has supported two major national history projects through Find and Connect funding.

4.1 National Library of Australia Oral History project

The National Library of Australia is undertaking a national oral history project to record the lives of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants. Interviewees for the Oral History Project include Former Child Migrants and Forgotten Australians, their siblings and partners, allied and other professionals, employees of past providers, religious personal and administrators.

At 18 January 2012, 114 interviews have been completed; 68 interviews are online and 51 interviews are in progress.

The National Library will complete its approximately 200 oral history interviews by November 2012.

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
FAMILIES, HOUSING, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND
INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO
2011-12 Additional Estimates Hearings

4.2 National Museum of Australia's exhibition Inside: Life in Children's Homes and Institutions

To mark the second anniversary of the Apology to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants, the National Museum of Australia opened an exhibition on 15 November 2011 called *Inside: Life in Children's Homes and Institutions*. The exhibition features the words, voices and objects of the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants who experienced institutional 'care' as children. While the exhibition closed on 26 February 2012, a touring exhibition program is being developed by the Museum in conjunction with cultural institutions in states and territories. The Museum advises that 22,283 people have visited the exhibition.

On 14 February 2012, the Museum hosted a public forum chaired by Dr Joanne Penglase, author of *Orphans of the Living* and co-founder of the Care Leavers Australia Network (CLAN), to discuss Dr Penglase's research on care leavers, and consider what had been achieved since the national Apology in November 2009. The forum included a panel discussion with Caroline Carroll (Alliance for Forgotten Australians), Bonney Djuric (Parramatta Girls), Frank Golding (CLAN and AFA), and Derek (Sharkie) Moriarty (Old Fairbridgians).

As part of the exhibition, the Museum also developed an education package, which can be accessed at http://www.nma.gov.au/education/school_resources/events/forgotten_australians/. This study unit was published in *Studies of Society and Environment* magazine in September 2011 and all secondary school libraries were sent two copies. Many of the stories and objects from the exhibition are featured in the education package. This study unit is now recognised for the curriculum of secondary school history and social studies students.

4.3 Australian National Maritime Museum exhibition – On Their Own – Britain's Child Migrants

The Australian National Maritime Museum developed a complementary exhibition *On Their Own - Britain's Child Migrants*, which focuses on the experiences of child migrants leaving Britain and coming to Australia. This exhibition opened in Sydney in November 2010 and the touring schedule includes South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia.

5. National Aged Care Education Package

The Department of Health and Ageing is developing a national education package for aged care service providers as part of the *Improving Aged Care for Forgotten Australians* project. The aim of the national education package is to increase awareness of the aged care needs of Forgotten Australians and to encourage people employed in the aged care sector to provide responsive and appropriate services. The education package is being developed in consultation with Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants.

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
FAMILIES, HOUSING, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND
INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO
2011-12 Additional Estimates Hearings

From 2 December 2009, care leavers have been included as a special needs group for aged care purposes and prioritised for aged care places delivered through the Department of Health and Aging.