

The Secretary
Senate Community Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

24th November 2008

Dear Senators,

The Forde Foundation (FF) is a charitable trust set up to help people who, as children, were in State care in Queensland.

The FF Board Of Advice (BOA) is appointed by the Queensland Public Trustee, on the advice of the Minister for Communities. The BOA provides advice to the Public Trustee in relation to grants that are made to former residents.

Over the past six months, the BOA has conducted a major Review of the Forde Foundation.

As part of the Review process, and to allow input from as many interested people as possible, the BOA developed a Discussion Paper (*Where to in the Future?*) and a Feedback Sheet (*have your say*). These two concise documents were sent to every former resident for whom the FF had postal details. Other stakeholders, both NGOs and Government, were asked to contribute their views.

The headings of the Review Discussion Paper give an indication of the changes that are impacting on the FF, and which are making it more difficult for former residents to receive a grant. Headings of '*where to in the Future?*' include:

- Why is there a review?
- Major changes taking place
- Redress Scheme
- The needs of applicants are changing
- Possible directions for change

The BOA's response to the consultants' Final Report (including five specific recommendations) is currently with the Public Trustee and the Minister for Communities.

Background to the FF:

The Forde Foundation came about as a response to recommendation 39 of the Forde Inquiry - a 1999 investigation by former Queensland Governor, Mrs Leneen Forde AC, into reports of abuse of children in Queensland Institutions, such as children's homes and youth detention centres.

Recommendation 39 stated that the Queensland Government and relevant religious authorities should make moves to help those children who have experienced abuse and neglect when in State care. In part this is being done through special services to help them deal with the effects of their childhood experiences. These services, which are co-located at Lotus Place, 26 Merivale St South Brisbane, include:

- The Forde Foundation
- The Esther Centre
- The Aftercare Resource Centre (ARC)
- And the Historical Abuse Network (HAN)

The Forde Foundation was set up to provide grants to former residents to help them overcome the disadvantages they now experience as a result of childhood treatment that affected their education, employment, health and general well being.

Grants from the Forde Foundation are not regarded as compensation.

The Redress Scheme:

In May 2007, the Queensland Government announced a separate compensation process, the Redress Scheme, which completes the Queensland Government's response to the recommendations of the Forde Inquiry into the Abuse of Children in Queensland institutions.

Under the scheme, eligible applicants receive an ex gratia payment, ranging from \$7,000 up to \$40,000, to acknowledge the impact of the past and help them move forward with their lives.

Applications closed on 30 September 2008. Former residents who did not wish to participate in the Redress Scheme are free to choose instead to pursue their legal rights.

The Forde Foundation does not administer the Redress Scheme. The Queensland Department of Communities has total carriage of this scheme.

How the Forde Foundation operates:

In 2000 and 2001, the Queensland Government contributed a total \$2million to the Trust Fund. Church organisations contributed \$90,000 and there have been a small number of private donations. The Government gave a further \$900,000 in 2005, and \$1.25million in 2006. A total of over \$1.6 million has been distributed to former residents over 12 grant rounds.

The Public Trustee of Queensland administers the Forde Foundation Trust and invests the capital for a mixture of income and long-term growth.

After considering all applications for assistance, the Board of Advice advises the Public Trustee how the grants should be allocated.

Possible Applicants to the FF:

Adults who are former residents of Queensland orphanages, youth detention centres, other residential care facilities and foster care are eligible to apply for a grant.

Verification Process:

To be eligible for assistance, a former resident's time in care must be verified. Former residents generally gain proof of their placement/s from the Department of Communities through a Freedom of Information request.

Grants are provided for:

Grants are provided for: basic life necessities; Education, employment and training; Items or services for self development or improved quality of life; Family reunification

The Foundation does not assist with:

The FF does not assist former residents with: clearance of debt; legal fees; Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) fees; the purchase of motor vehicles or assistance with registration or repairs; recurrent items such as rent, electricity, telephone; electronic games equipment

Process of assessing grants:

After the date for applications closes, BOA members meet to consider all applications. To ensure the applications fit within the guidelines and to promote fairness within the process, the Board takes into consideration criteria such as: length of time in care; which institutions; age; level of need; what has already been received; the benefits to be gained from the grant; the number of applicants; the amounts of assistance requested; and the funds available for distribution.

When the Board has considered all applications, recommendations are forwarded to the Public Trustee who approves and disperses the funds.

Specific comments to the Senate Committee:

Many former residents have expressed concerns about their ongoing needs to members of the BOA. The Board members are aware that the health needs of former residents will require increased attention as the client population ages and as their health interventions become more complex and costly.

As former residents seek solutions to their medical problems, additional stress is placed upon both the health system and the Foundation, particularly in the light of the limited reach of current initiatives.

A priority access model for health care, similar to that provided to veterans, continues to be strongly supported by former residents.

Alternatively, improved universal health coverage for disabled, disadvantaged and vulnerable populations in the areas of mental, dental and community health could help meet the needs of vulnerable former residents.

Further Discussion:

Senators, it might be helpful to you deliberations if some or all of your Committee met with the Forde Foundation Board Of Advice.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this publicly-available information about the Forde Foundation to your Committee.

On behalf of the Forde Foundation Board Of Advice, I wish you well in your work which could bring of immeasurable benefit to those citizens whose lives have been adversely affected by decisions taken by government and non-government agencies in past years.

Yours sincerely,

Terry Sullivan
Chair, FF BOA
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