

Forgotten Australian's
WingsForSurvivors

05 /03/2009

**Senate Inquiry Into The Implementations Of The
Recommendations Of The Lost Innocents and
Forgotten Australians Report.**

Senate Affairs Reference Committee

Submission

With a great deal of enthusiasm we waited the outcome of the Senate Inquiry and the response into the implementations of the recommendations by the Commonwealth Government. Out of the 36 recommendations very few have been acted on. The Commonwealth Government's response to the majority of the recommendations was that it was a matter for the State and Territory Governments, churches and organizations to deal with. The report was damning into the treatment and past practices of children in institution care.

The Authors of this submission are all Forgotten Australians. We belong to a website called "Wings for survivors" for Forgotten Australians. Our website was created by a Forgotten Australian to be a positive-psychology hub, to nurture creativity, friendship, and provide a peer-support network 24/7.

Over time we felt compelled to express some of the points we had all raised in common.

Our first such venture of obtaining signatures for a Federal and State Government petition was organized and this was for many Forgotten Australians the first venture into the public arena. Despite overwhelming feelings of being naked in the public arena and deep feelings of shame many members and non-members attended the day. The petition took place on Australia Day at Lake Wendouree in Ballarat. Members and non-members came from Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and many

parts of Victoria. We had t-shirts made and car stickers highlighting who we are. We have sent a copy of the petitions to Minister Jenny Macklin, a date is being arranged to deliver the original copy to Senator Claire Moore. We are calling on the Commonwealth Government to rectify the wrongs done to us as children. Our lives as children for the most part could be described as a living-hell. We need a strong commitment from all sectors of Governments: Commonwealth, State and territories to act upon their responsibilities. All Governments and Churches failed to protect innocent young children, leaving us exposed to the trauma of abuse. We the adults are a product of the abuse and have struggled and continue to struggle with issues that stemmed from our past. We implore the Commonwealth Government to bring us out of the shadows and show the way so that our nation can be proud of the action that it has taken. Let us suffer no more as we have waited our lifetime for change. No one heard us cry as children, but let us now be heard. Help us heal our wounds.

The Stolen Generation received a heartfelt apology on behalf of the Commonwealth Government. Our nation acknowledged the harm done to the stolen generations Our Indigenous Australians have waited many decades for this apology.

The Forgotten Australians are still waiting for an apology from the Commonwealth Government. Our healing can only start when the Commonwealth and our nation hear an apology for the Forgotten Australians. Our history needs to be told so that our nation understands what was done to us, the innocent children of a system that thrived on systemic abuse. We continue to remain hidden from the public eye, still existing behind closed door, kept silent and stagnating in our pool of grief and anger. As children we have had to endure the following:

- Physical/torture*
 - Emotional abuse*
 - Sexual abuse/rape*
 - The use of experimental drugs on children and babies*
 - Deprivation of basic medical/dental care*
 - Isolation cells*
 - Missing or incomplete records*
 - Education was not seen as a high priority for children in institutional care.*
 - Young children were required to work whilst in institutional care. Many were removed from school at very young ages to work on the farms and were used instead of employing domestic staff.*
 - Basic life skills were for the majority of children in care nonexistent*
- Many left the institutions at the ages of 15-16 without any knowledge of how to care for themselves.*

Holiday placement schemes exposed institutional children to sexual abuse.

The list is long that the Forgotten Australians have been subjected to. The illegal use of drug trials has been confirmed yet despite inquiries by Forgotten Australians they are unable to find the records.

In August 2006 Premier Steve Bracks issued an apology about some of the past practices that happened to wards of the state. It was outrageous that laws had been changed so that the State Government could not be held liable for any harm that was caused to a Ward Of The State. The apology by Steve Bracks appeared hollow and lacked conviction for former wards of the state. To this day legal action is considered high risk and the Premier of the Victorian State Government John Brumby's departments pursue vigorously each case that is taken to court. Once again Forgotten Australians are the victims of a system the State Government is defending to protect itself. There is no compassion or consideration of the oppression this continues to cause Forgotten Australians. Our circumstances have been illuminated through The Lost Innocents and the Forgotten Australian Report. Leaving us to go through the court system is deplorable, and to recount our stories over and over is emotionally exhausting and further damaging in so many ways.

Further, the church abuses the law by not having a legal entity that can be sued. So even with the knowledge that abuse occurred in many cases, the church continues to protect its assets – condemnable. The law seems to protect the churches and further alienate Forgotten Australians.

Feelings of anger and frustration are commonly expressed by those to seek Redress with the State Government and churches. The statute of limitations further fuels the argument that the bias lies with the State Governments, churches, organizations, and the individuals who perpetrated these crimes against children.

As Forgotten Australians we have few services provided for us. With Vanish no longer offering services after 30th June, Victorian Forgotten Australians' fear they will once again be left without any resources. Admittedly there are groups such as CLAN but due to such small funding grants they have to charge Forgotten Australians for their services. This is a most unsatisfactory way for an organization to be run. Further funding is urgently required so that groups can remain independent of Government bodies, but deliver services to and for Forgotten Australians without the need to charge any fees.

Finally, there needs to be more constructive communication between support organizations nationally, so that Forgotten Australians are kept informed about what is happening in areas of services and events that are taking place.

*We would like to draw your attention to these recommendations – as
Forgotten Australians' we request:*

1. *A National Apology*
2. *Redress for Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia, and the Northern Territory.
Redress should have been a national system overseen by the Commonwealth Government and the monetary compensations equal in each State for ALL Forgotten Australians. The Commonwealth Government needs to investigate the inequities of the Redress Schemes in all States. It would be were a fairer/balanced system in place.*
3. *Inquiry into all States and Territories that do not have a redress scheme*
4. *Children who were in institutional care placed in a non-custodial role be acknowledged and compensated for the abuse that they endured*
5. *Support and counseling be made available to Forgotten Australians who are going through the court system or other types of legal action (or assistance to access the services currently available).*
6. *Statutory Limitation Laws be changed and adapted due to the circumstances of Forgotten Australians*
7. *Police, Churches and Governments should be actively perusing criminal charges against perpetrators who have committed crimes against children whilst in care. An interstate registry should be established so that the perpetrator of crimes committed against children can be more easily identified and all corroborating evidence is accessible to each case.*
8. *All Forgotten Australians are able to access services regardless of what state they now live in and which state the abuse occurred in.*
9. *Forgotten Australians living outside metropolitan areas have access to services too*
10. *An Identification Gold Card for all Forgotten Australians, linked to a system that can assist Forgotten Australians which links to benefits and required services.*
11. *Urgent assistance with dental and denture work is required without government restrictions*

12. *Historical photographs and documents are preserved and accessible so that people can learn from this and not repeat such a dark chapter in our history.*
13. *Plaques be placed on buildings that were institutions*
14. *Unmarked graves are researched and a memorial plaque be placed acknowledging the children who are buried there.*
15. *Aged care for Forgotten Australians is reviewed as many are terrified of once again going into institutional care.*
16. *Counseling be provided long-term and if deemed appropriate the Forgotten Australians are referred to a psychiatrist. That there is no gap fee or out of pocket expenses for Forgotten Australians.*
17. *Affordable housing for Forgotten Australians*
18. *Healing retreats and workshops are provided so that Forgotten Australians can heal wounds and therefore be able to participate in the wider community. Isolation is a common factor with Forgotten Australians.*
19. *Education courses focusing on literacy and further education prospects be explored*
20. *Assistance with basic life skills (many of us are illiterate).*

21. *The Commonwealth Government can assist the State and Territorial Governments with funding to provide services and assistance for Forgotten Australians.*

Many Forgotten Australians dream to be one day able to state "I am a REMEMBERED FORGOTTEN AUSTRALIAN".

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