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Senator Claire Moore
Chair of the Community Affairs References Committee
C/-The Secretary Senate Community Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100 Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

20 June 2009

Dear Senator Moore,

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

Following is my submission to the inquiry.

As you may recall I attended the hearing held at Bankstown Sports Centre earlier this year at which time I tabled my book, *14 Years of Hell-an anthology of the Hay Girls Institution 1961-1974*.

The book came about as a result of a reunion I organised for the former inmates of the Hay Girls Institution an annex of Parramatta Girls Home in March 2007. It contains a collection of personal accounts of former inmates together with reportage and excerpts from various NSW Government sources including the Child Welfare Department of the day. Its contents are a unique record of the experiences of women, who as children experienced institutional 'care' in the State's most inhumane institution.

Since publishing this book I have undertaken extensive research on the history and experience of the Parramatta Girls Home and have prepared a thesis for publication. The research project was funded by Parramatta City Council, Parramatta Heritage and Stories Fund from funds allocated by the Federal Government to the Council in promoting Parramatta as a living museum and tourist destination.

As a one of the Forgotten Australians, I have felt it important that this history of Australia not be forgotten and that much can be learnt from the past.

The history of the Forgotten Australians and Lost Innocents is an historical fact and as such I would like to address recommendations 24 and 34 to 38. *see attachment 1 listing recommendations.*

Before proceeding I would like to commend the efforts of the Committee in identifying past wrongs and in making recommendations to address the needs of the Forgotten Australians and Lost Innocents.

In the many years I have been engaged in this activity, I have found a consensus among those who identify with these groups a desire to improve the lot of children and other marginalized groups today and in the future.

In addressing the recommendations I acknowledge that the issues of Forgotten Australians and Lost Innocents together with those of the Stolen Generations transcends state boundaries, however the genesis of the welfare system originates in NSW and in particular Parramatta.

Based on this I would like to present some statistical facts in support of a proposal that Parramatta is an ideal location for the establishment of a Living Memorial.

The Parramatta electorate is located in the heart of Greater Western Sydney where according to the 2001 census, 392,562 (23.3%) under the age of 15 years reside. This represents nearly 10% of all young people in Australia and almost 30% of all young people in NSW.

There are more young people living in Greater Western Sydney than in South Australia and Tasmania combined. Additionally the Parramatta Justice Precinct is the third largest justice precinct in Australia and one among the five locations in the State operating a Children's Court.

Given these facts it could be argued that young people in the Greater Western Sydney region represent the larger portion of those under the supervision, or notification of DoCS today. Following the government's baby bonus scheme, the region has experienced an increase in population which, given the historical facts, will be accompanied with an increase in notifications of children at risk.

It is therefore of utmost importance that provision be made to deliver cultural and educative facilities and increase employment opportunities that promote understandings and engage in empowering communities in order to minimize those in the community at greater risk.

I consider that this can be achieved through the establishment of a Living Memorial dedicated to the Forgotten Australians, Lost Innocents and the Stolen Generations in the former buildings of the Parramatta Girls Home together with those of the adjacent former Female Factory, now part of Cumberland Hospital. (Rec. 34 & 35)

The Living Memorial campaign proposes that the precinct be established under a statutory authority similar to that of the Port Arthur Historic Authority and be jointly funded by the State and Federal Governments.

It further proposes that:

- An independent research centre be established at the site to undertake historical research, the collection of oral histories and facilitate inter-disciplinary research into the relationship between child welfare/child protection and the areas such as welfare dependency, social problems such as drug and alcohol abuse and family relationship breakdowns. (Rec. 36 & 37)

- A cultural and learning centre be established to support the exchange and dissemination of information and knowledge about the Forgotten Australians, Lost Innocents and the Stolen Generations. (Rec.35 & 38)
- In collaboration with the NSW Institute of Psychiatry who are currently tenanted at the location, to develop specialist higher education courses for the training of health professionals in the areas related to the particular psychological and psychiatric effects of institutional abuse.(Rec. 24)

This proposal was first announced in November 2005 and was officially launched in April 2008. Interest in the proposal for the Living Memorial has been received from a number of State and Federal Members of Parliament together with various NGO's representing the Forgotten Australians, Women and historical interest groups.

Apart from the demographic information presented earlier in this document, the appropriateness of the site is supported by a number of historic facts integral to the history and development of welfare practice and delivery.

Parramatta was the birthplace of our nation's first attempts in the provision of welfare services to marginalized groups. The first of these being convict women and their children who on arrival to the colony of NSW were sent to Parramatta as 'hut keepers'. In providing a place of refuge for them additions to Parramatta's colonial gaol saw the establishment of the Factory above the Gaol in 1804. In 1816 a government orphanage was built on the shores of the Parramatta River operating as such until 1886. In 1821 a new facility for convict women and their children was built. This was known as the Female Factory and it operated as such until 1848. During this time all 'foundling' babies were dispatched to the Factory to be breast fed by the abundant number of nursing mothers confined to the Factory because at that time orphan schools did not take children under the age of three years.

In 1841 Australia's first government built and funded Catholic Orphanage was built on land adjacent to the Female Factory. This institution operated until 1886 when the then Sisters of the Good Shepherd were asked to vacate the premises by the government of the day. In 1887 girls held at the Biloela Industrial School for Females were transferred to the site and by August of that year it was proclaimed an Industrial School for Girls. From 1887 until 1983 it operated under various names as the Girls Training School, Parramatta Girls Home and Kamballa and Taldree- all of which in today's terms are known as juvenile detention centres.

In 1984 recommendations were made that it be used to accommodate boys from the juvenile detention centre known as Endeavour House (formerly Tamworth Boys Institution). This proposal was withdrawn because alternative facilities were built.

The site's long association with women and children did not cease until April 2008, when after a campaign to halt inappropriate utilization of the Norma Parker Detention Centre for Women detention centre (formerly Parramatta Girls Home) - succeeded.

In concluding I would like to add that Parragirls PFFP Association has received no funding for its advocacy and support work on behalf of former inmates of the girls institution apart from assistance from DoCs in meeting costs associated with the Hay Girls reunion in 2007, for which I was the principal organiser.

Since establishing the association in 2006 I have promoted awareness about the history and heritage of the Forgotten Australians and the earlier convict women and children. This has included giving

various talks and presentations to the media and to groups such as the Jessie Street National Women's Library, the Retired Teachers Association, the NSW Teachers Association, Women's Action and Information Group, Parramatta Heritage Women's Stories at a public forum at the Riverside Theatre, International Women's Day Celebrations- Lane Cove Council, Women and Psychology National Conference University of Sydney and as key note speaker at the NSW Women's Gathering in 2007.

Additionally our self funded website has been archived by Pandora- National Library of Australia, NSW Government Culture and Tourism portal and the Australian Women's History Forum. I have also listed entries appearing on Wikipedia and About.Com which have also been taken up by a number of other web information services.

In regards to the site's availability currently the Precinct is distributed between NSW Health, DoCs and NSW Corrective Services. All buildings and structures are listed on the State Heritage list and on the Register of the National Estate. Premises currently owned by Corrective Services are vacant- being the larger portion of the former Girls Institution; premises owned by DoCs are currently under occupied with a section of one building in use; premises owned by NSW Health are partially occupied by the NSW Institute of Psychiatry and the Western Sydney Area Health Services.

The Precinct Living Memorial proposal is compatible with Parramatta City Council's, *Parramatta Twenty 25 Strategic Plan* and Councils *Arts Facilities and Cultural Places framework*.

I support the suggestion that a Commissioner be created on HEROC or some other Commonwealth body to represent Forgotten Australians and that the Commission coordinate the delivery of services to Forgotten Australians.

I support the suggestion that child welfare agency documents for both State and NGO's to be considered State Records for the purpose of the Authority to collect and control said records *and* that open access to records be available after a period of 30 years rather than the current situation which prohibits general access for 100 years.

End of submission

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Attachment 1

Submission by Bonney Djuric on behalf of Parramatta Female Factory Precinct Inc.(Parragirls)

Recommendation 24

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.

Recommendation 34

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.

Recommendation 35

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 traveling exhibition.

Recommendation 36

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.

Recommendation 37

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.*

Recommendation 38

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.