



Australian Government
Department of Health

Caring for Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants and Stolen Generations

An information package for aged care services

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Purpose

Increase awareness about the following Care Leaver groups:

- Forgotten Australians
- Former Child Migrants
- Stolen Generations

Recognise the emotional and physical issues which they may bring with them as they age and consider their on-going (or future) care needs.

Forgotten Australians

Up to 500,000 children were placed in:

- foster homes
- children's homes
- orphanages
- other institutions.

They came from all parts of Australia and all levels of Australian society.



Source: Care Leavers Australasia Network.
Archive picture of Ballarat Orphanage, Victoria.

Former Child Migrants

Thousands of children were brought to Australia as unaccompanied migrants from the UK and Malta and placed into institutions.



Stolen Generations

Children of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent were forcibly removed from their families by federal and state government agencies and church missions, under Acts of their respective parliaments.



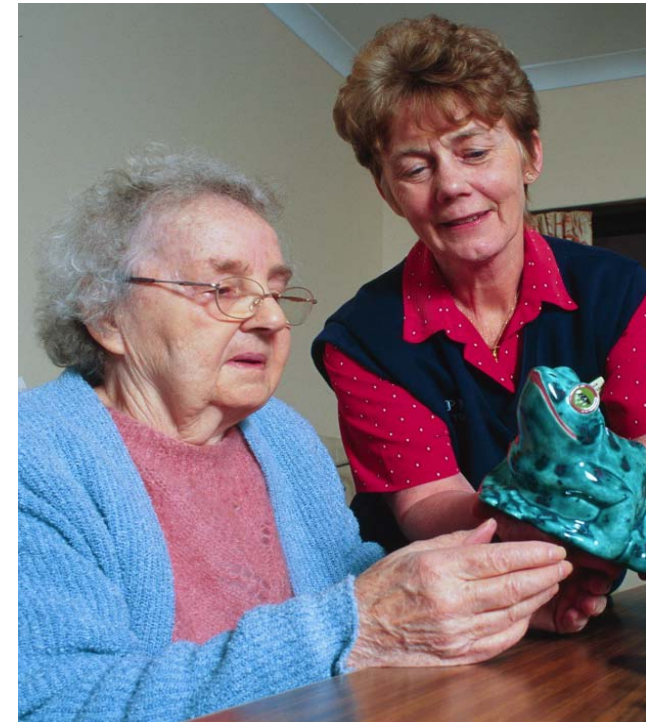
Courtesy Battye Library 74244P

The Governor Sir Charles and Lady Gairdner with Abbot Gomez inspecting the children of St. Joseph's Orphanage, New Norcia, WA

Source: Battye Library 74244P.
St Joseph's Orphanage, New Norcia, WA

Understanding their needs

Working with members of these three groups requires an understanding of, and sympathy for, the mistreatment experienced during childhood.



Separation, loss and abandonment

‘Welfare departments knew what was happening in these places, the abuse, the lack of food, the lack of clothes, the lack of education, the separation from family... they knew.

No one cared.’



Source: Care Leavers Australasia Network.
Archive picture of Ballarat Orphanage, Victoria.

Separation, loss and abandonment in terms of belongings

Many may find it difficult to imagine things which, in an aged care setting, others may take for granted – such as sending their clothes to the laundry along with everyone else's.



Source: Care Leavers Australasia Network.
Archive picture of Salvation Army Boys' Home, Bexley, NSW.

Exploitation and neglect

Harsh discipline and exploitation were often the norm for Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants and Stolen Generations. This has left a lasting impact on their mental health and emotional wellbeing, as well as on their physical health.



Exploitation and neglect in relation to education

Education was often denied to these groups. This has led to some having difficulties reading and writing, though many are too embarrassed to say so, for fear of humiliation.



Punishment and brutality

Most children who spent time in institutions experienced rigidly controlled childhoods.

They had strict schedules for getting up, eating, praying, washing and lights-out.



Source: Care Leavers Australasia Network.
Archive picture of Salvation Army Boys' Home, Bexley, NSW.

Physical or sexual abuse and privacy

Many people experienced physical or sexual abuse. This is particularly important to consider when providing daily care services, such as dressing, undressing or bathing.



Source: Care Leavers Australasia Network.
Archive picture of Salvation Army Boys' Home,
Bexley, NSW.

Impacts

Aged care providers sometimes hear that people choose to live a life of homelessness or social exclusion. This is rarely the case. Instead people make what they perceive to be the better choice between two bad options.

Loss of identity and culture

Loss of identity

- No birth certificates
- Had their birth names changed
- Known only as numbers during their early years

Loss of culture

- Separated from their families in difficult circumstances
- Forcibly removed from their families
- Never reunited with family or cultural heritage

Aged care fears

Factors to consider:

- Health status
- Routines
- Food
- Belongings
- Privacy
- Authority figures
- Locks
- Education
- Identity
- Celebration
- Culture

Conclusion

Given their past experiences, people from these backgrounds may be more sensitive to some aspects of life in aged care homes and institutional settings.

Workers in aged care know and understand about groups with anxieties and issues, health issues, language and cultural issues, dementia.

The issues and concerns of Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants and Stolen Generations are just as real.

Further information

The Information Package

Department of Health – <https://agedcare.health.gov.au/careleavers>

For Forgotten Australians

- The Alliance for Forgotten Australians - www.forgottenaustralians.org.au
- Care Leavers Australasia Network - www.clan.org.au

Further information

For Former Child Migrants

- The International Association of Former Child Migrants and their Families - www.childmigrantstrust.com/intl-association
- Child Migrants Trust - www.childmigrantstrust.com
- Find & Connect Services - <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/>

Further information

For Stolen Generations

- National Stolen Generations Alliance - www.nsga.org.au
- Link-Up Services - www.aiatsis.gov.au/research/finding-your-family/link-services
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation - www.healingfoundation.org.au