*Environment Guideline for Residential Care*

*Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers*

This Guideline has been developed by a Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers Advisory Group, in partnership with Helping Hand Aged Care in South Australia.

The Guideline is designed to assist residential aged care homes to ensure they are providing safe and inclusive environments for Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers.

It can support aged care services in the design and/or re-design of their homes, and can assist in applications for Specialisation Verification. The Specialisation Verification framework does not have explicit details about how a physical environment must meet the needs of Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers.

Care homes may not be able to deliver on every point in this Guideline. However, aged care services are encouraged to discuss with their own care leaver communities which ones are of greatest importance. Care homes are also encouraged to continue to make changes to their environments to keep trying to meet more of the points outlined in this document.

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| **During a tour** | **Why this is important** | **Comments from reviewer** |
| Does the person hosting the tour know about Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers? | It’s important that the history of Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers is understood, because of complex trauma and its impacts. It means that Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers do not have to tell their story/the history of Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers over and again. If you have knowledge, you won’t retraumatise the person. |  |
| Will the care home ensure that tours are conducted at a time when there are no religious services being held? | Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers were often forced to participate in religious activity. If Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers were in a church-run home and were abused, they do not want to be triggered. |  |
| Will you conduct the tour in a slow way, and share little bits of information at a time? | This will help ensure the person doesn’t get overwhelmed.  |  |
| **During the Admissions process** |  |  |
| Do the people in the Admissions team know about Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers? | It’s important that the history of Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers is understood, because of complex trauma and its impacts. It means that Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers do not have to tell their story/the history of Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers over and again. If you have knowledge, you won’t retraumatise the person. |  |
| Can a resident choose where their room is located? | Some children who were abused may be triggered by the location of a room, or the design of a wing, or the appearance of a hallway. |  |
| **Moving in**  |  |  |
| Do the staff who welcome a new resident know about Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers? | It’s important that the history of Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers is understood, because of complex trauma and its impacts. It means that Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers do not have to tell their story/the history of Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers over and again. If you have knowledge, you won’t retraumatise the person. |  |
| Will there be staff available to help a new resident move in, if the resident doesn’t have any family to help? | Most Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers were disconnected from their families and many have never reconnected, or found family. |  |
| Do you provide a welcome card or welcome pack to my new home?Do you provide a map of the care home?Do you provide a list of staff and who to contact for particular questions? | This makes people feel important and that they are going to be part of that community. It will help people start to connect. It can help people feel a bit more secure. As a Ward of the State, children were reluctant to ask questions because of how they were treated as a child when they asked questions. |  |
| **The care home** |  |  |
| Is the National Apology to Forgotten Australians on display? | It makes Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers feel acknowledged, and respected, and made to feel that they count. It means that everybody who reads it will know there was a reason there was an Apology.  |  |
| Are pets welcome? | Pets are therapeutic and important members of families – especially as Forgotten Australians and care leavers have been broken away from family. Sometimes a pet is the only one that someone can talk to, and animals don’t judge. Some people possibly have better relationships with animals than they do with humans. |  |
| Are there rooms with balconies or courtyards? | We don’t want to feel locked up. We want to be able to get out in the fresh air and have contact with nature. Sometimes having a balcony provides an option to move away from other people. |  |
| Are the doors to internal courtyards and outdoor spaces unlocked? | We don’t want to feel locked up. We want freedom of movement and choice to move around and not to fear doors being locked. |  |
| Can a resident choose to lock the door to their room and have their own key? | It’s important to have control over our own space. And to have control over our possessions. We might want to have some alone time and not be interrupted.  |  |
| Do staff know how to be respectful of resident possessions? | Often as children, possessions were taken away from workers, or stolen by other children. Any few possessions that we might have had were highly valued. If an item was a bit worn out, staff would often take it away from children.  |  |
| Are there rooms available with a separate bedroom and a separate lounge area? | Children were often put into cells and solitary confinement. Some dormitories and missions had tiny cubicles for sleeping. |  |
| Are there rooms available with views? | There were no views in the institutions children were placed in.  |  |
| Are there small areas with lounges? | You might feel a bit overwhelmed in a bigger crowd. You might want a quiet spot to sit with a friend.  |  |
| Are there small dining spaces (rather than large dining halls)? | Many institutions had large dining halls. Some people are very self conscious about eating in front of other people. |  |
| Do you use CCTV? | Some people will want it while others will not. It would be good to see who comes into a unit area in cases of people living with dementia specifically – for their safety – to make sure there’s no abuse going on. |  |
| Are there areas available for people to smoke? | Some Forgotten Australians smoke. There isn’t an expectation that people can smoke close to the care home. However, they would like a pleasant outdoor space made available. |  |
| Do overnight staff understand how some people might act at night? | Some people have trouble sleeping and there might be reasons connected to their childhoods as to why. |  |
| If I have a partner, can we be in a room together? | This provides choice. |  |
| Am I able to make my own breakfast? | Maybe you don’t want to eat the mass produced breakfast. Some people like to eat at a range of different times. I want to choose what time I eat.  |  |
| Is there food available all day that I can access, or cook myself? | You might not be hungry at set meal times. As children, we were often subjected to rigid routines. If food is regularly available, we won’t think that we need to hoard food out of fear that it will be taken away.  |  |
| Is there a room where a visitor, or friend can stay? | Some people could be travelling long distances to visit. The care home is now our home and we might want friends to visit. There might a person who might be palliative and it would be good to have someone they know close by. |  |
| Do staff wear uniforms?They would still need to use badges. | Seeing staff in uniforms can be very triggering.Nurses wore the white starch hats.Some staff wore army boots. |  |
| Do you have raised garden beds? Do you have pots on wheels where residents can grow flowers / plants / vegetables of their own choice? | It is good to encourage activity and stimulation.  |  |
| Do you have murals on the walls? | It can be calming, and can also stimulate your brain. |  |
| Do you have a gym, or offer exercise classes, and meditation? | Good for emotional and physical wellbeing. |  |
| Can I have my own curtains and my own quilt in my room? | You’ve probably come from your home and you want to bring something with you. You don’t want all curtains and quilts to be the same. You don’t want to be treated like a number anymore.  |  |
| Do we have freedom of movement? Are we able to come and go as we choose? | You weren’t allowed out the gate when we were children. |  |
| Is there a laundry where I can wash my own things? | Clothes were often taken away from us as children and replaced with work clothes. If I can wash my own things, I know they won’t be taken away.Also, please show us where the laundry is on site if you have a large communal laundry on site. |  |
| Do you have a counsellor on site? | If and when needed, counselling support should be available. |  |
| Do you have a hair salon at the care home? | Some children who were taken into residential environments had their heads shaved and were forced to be washed in a kerosene bath. Hair washing can be a triggering event. Giving a resident the option to have their hair washed in the on-site salon, fully clothed, may be a choice preferred by some residents. |  |
| Will you ensure that staff are not walking along with a bundle of keys rattling? | That was common practice in many institutional environments and is very triggering.Bells are also triggering. They would ring for every transition – school, meals, church etc. |  |
| Is it possible to have a double bed (rather than a single bed)? | The single bed reminds us of the beds we were given as children. The single bed reminds us of the wet bed dormitory that we were placed in if we wet the bed. |  |
| What was the building used for before it was a care home? | There are residential care homes around Australia that were previously used as orphanages. In some parts of Australia, some people may be returning to the same building where they were placed in care as children. |  |
| Is religious imagery contained to only the chapel area? | Many children were forced to participate in religious activity, and many children’s homes were run by church groups. Religious activity and imagery can be triggering. |  |
| Would you consider a section / cottage / wing for only Forgotten Australians? | I could just say “I’m having a bad day today” and I wouldn’t have to explain it. People around me would understand. |  |
| Will staff ask me if I want my room doors open or closed, locked or unlocked, and whether I would like lights on or off? | Some people will not be able to cope with a door being locked, but they might like a screen in the room, to ensure there is some privacy. Some will want to lock their doors. |  |
| Have you checked the names of your buildings/wings? | If a building/wing is named after a known perpetrator, this will be triggering. |  |

The (name of) care home was reviewed using this Guideline on (date).

The review was undertaken by:

* Residents living at the care home who identify as Forgotten Australians or Care Leavers (include names)
* Forgotten Australians or Care Leavers who have a relationship with our care home (include names)
* Representatives of a Find and Connect service (name of service and name/s of people)