Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers

*Who are Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers?*

A group known as Forgotten Australians has been identified as having many challenges as they face the possibility of aged care. Forgotten Australians represent the 500,000 children that were placed into institutional and out-of-home care in Australia in the last century.

Of this group, 7,000 were former child migrants, 50,000 were indigenous children from the Stolen Generations and over 440,000 were non-indigenous children.

Many of these children experienced significant physical and emotional trauma as a result of being placed in institutional care as children and now, as an older group, are experiencing barriers to accessing aged care as a result.

We respect that not everyone will identify with the terminology ‘Forgotten Australians’. Some people prefer the term ‘Care Leaver’ or another term.

*Why do Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers need trauma aware and healing informed aged care?*

They were often lonely and exploited, subjected to punishment, rigid rules, humiliation, and suffered physical, emotional and sexual abuse. Many were denied an adequate education and were forced to work virtually as slaves for those entrusted with their care. Nutrition and health care were also poor, and many were subject to forced medical interventions.

This lack of identity, safety and care as children has often produced lifelong negative consequences for their wellbeing as adults. Trust in authority and institutions has been impacted and many have ongoing mental and physical health issues. Family and social relationships and skills were consistently impaired, and incarceration and substance abuse has resulted for many. Challenges with employment, housing and income security have been commonplace in their adult lives.

As they age, in many cases prematurely, the prospect of needing care may provoke a range of feelings including being truly frightened. They are aware that their past experiences may impact on their behaviour, needs and choices as they age.

*What is trauma* *aware and healing informed care?*

When carers understand trauma they can recognise signs, know the impact of behaviours, and reduce the risk of   
re-traumatisation.

Understanding the impact of trauma is beneficial to us all.

For those community, health and related services who may be working with Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers, knowing more about them and their needs can help to provide better and more effective services to individuals, as well as to the community as a whole.

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*Where can I learn more about trauma aware and healing informed care?*

Helping Hand Aged Care has developed some excellent free training and resources, called Real Care the Second Time Around, co-designed by people who identify as Forgotten Australians or Care Leavers with lived experience.

A qr code on a white background

Description automatically generatedThere is an e-learning program developed in collaboration with The Australian Institute of Social Relations, Relationships Australia South Australia, and Elm Place, which is an introduction to understanding the impacts of childhood trauma for people now entering aged care. You can access this on the Helping Hand website by scanning the QR code to the left or by going to www.helpinghand.org.au/forgotten-australians

There are also numerous resources available for immediate download. These include:

* A publication to assist aged care providers working with Forgotten Australians.
* A publication to assist aged care providers to support their clients develop one-page summaries that capture their individual stories and follow them through the aged care pathway.
* A copy of Helping Hand’s position statement regarding Forgotten Australians.

Please share amongst your networks. For any further information, or to request hard copies of resources, please contact us on 1300 653 600 or via info@helpinghand.org.au

*What do I do if I think someone is a Forgotten Australian or Care Leaver?*

You may wish to gently invite conversation about what this means for them and the way they are cared for. Please be mindful, they may decline.

If they do agree to talk, please provide them with the Real Care the Second Time Around Resources (available on the Helping Hand website via the QR code and link above).

You can also direct them to Care Leaver support networks. These services are specially trained to provide support and advocacy to Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers.

Information about local support is available.

Insert information about local support services here.

Please encourage them to talk with doctors and allied health providers, so they can provide their care sensitively.

*Efforts to ensure that Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers receive real care the second time around are real, concerted, and ongoing.*

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