Trauma Aware and Healing Informed Aged Care for   
Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers

We are proud to be providing trauma aware and healing informed aged care for 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 & 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 are we doing?*

As part of our commitment to person-centred care, we are embedding trauma aware and healing informed care for Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers. Some excellent training and resources have been developed by Helping Hand Aged Care, co-designed with some Forgotten Australians themselves.

We will do the training and use the resources in our teams to develop and embed our approach to trauma aware and healing informed care.

*Where can I learn more about trauma-informed care?*

We will ensure that our intake processes invite people to tell us if they were in care as a child. We will also provide people with opportunities to tell us at [lifestyle planning].

People may choose to disclose only with a team member they really trust. In these circumstances, the staff member can ask if the information can be shared with others in the team so that we can ensure our care for the person is more trauma aware and healing informed.

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Others may display behaviours that are driven by trauma. We may not know the basis of the trauma in these cases, but we should still think about how we care for the person in a more trauma aware and healing informed way.

*What does this mean for me?*

Your manager will talk to you about what this means. But it will involve doing the training and talking about trauma aware and healing informed care in your team. It will mean thinking about how we use the principles of trauma aware and healing informed care: safety, choice, collaboration, trustworthiness and empowerment. We will ask residents who are Care Leavers to tell us what it means for them. The little things that can be very meaningful for Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers including, for example:

* Calling someone by their name, not “Love” or “Dear”
* Asking someone’s preference for having their door open or closed
* Providing options about where to eat meals
* Asking gender preferences for showering and personal care, and ensuring privacy as much as possible
* Not moving a person’s things in their room
* Providing a consistent care team as much as possible
* Explaining what is happening at all stages and giving them choices and options
* For celebration days, such as Christmas and Mother’s Day, giving residents a choice about whether they participate or not

*What do I need to do?*

* Do the training – [explain whether this will be paid time, any timeframes training required by, link to training, who to advise when training completed]
* Talk in your teams and reflect on your practice about how you can work in a more trauma-informed way, for example:
  + how you can be delivering person-centred care in every engagement you have with a resident
  + think about the residents in your care – are we giving them choice and control as much as possible? Could difficult behaviours be related to trauma? Are there options to provide them with greater autonomy and dignity? Can we do anything more to meet their preferences? Are there certain days of the year, eg Mother’s Day or Christmas Day which might be triggering for people – how do we provide alternative activities or respect the wishes of a person not to be involved
  + think about how you share information in the team so a person does not need to keep retelling their story?
  + think about whether there are policies, procedures or practices that get in the way of delivering trauma-informed care, and talk in your work teams about how can we go about making a change
* Make sure you know how to access resources about Care Leaver support services in your local area so you can support any residents who are Forgotten Australians or Care Leavers
* Talk to others in the community about trauma-informed care for Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers – GPs and allied health professionals, community contacts, volunteers, your family and friends. This helps raise awareness and understanding in the community generally.
* Be proud of the work you do! The service we provide will get better and better the more we learn and work together on this important project.

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*What support is there for staff??*

Working with people who have experienced trauma can cause strong emotions in ourselves. And sometimes we might recognise that there is lived experience of care within our own families, and this can trigger trauma for us as individuals or within our family and community.

We want you to know that it is ok to reach out for support if you need it.

Within our teams, we recognise the need to support each other, and talking to your manager could be a good place to start.

We also have Champions for this work in our organisation and they are available to assist you if you need it.

Our Champions are [insert name and contact details].

If you need professional counselling support, our Employee Assistance Program can help you work through difficulties.

Any discussions about your personal situation will be treated confidentially.

*What else can I do? How can I learn more?*

* Keep talking about it in your work team
* Encourage others to do the training and learn about Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers
* Explore books and websites that give you more information about Forgotten Australians and Care Leaver history and trauma informed care eg <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/>

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