



Helping Hand Aged Care Real Care the Second Time Around

A project that aims to respond to the aged care needs of Forgotten Australians/Care Leavers

Helping Hand Aged Care has been working with a group of older Forgotten Australians/Care Leavers on a project entitled Real Care the Second Time Around since June 2019. The project works with a co-design group of 16 people who identify as Forgotten Australians/Care Leavers and aims to improve their access to aged care services and the quality of services delivered by aged care providers. The work is designed to ensure that this group of older Australians can access the care that they need as they age.

Who are Forgotten Australians/Care Leavers

'Forgotten Australians/ Care Leavers' are the estimated 500,000 children placed in institutional (e.g. orphanages) and out-of-home "care" in Australia in the last century. This 500,000 comprises over 400,000 non-indigenous children, known as Forgotten Australians; approximately 50,000 indigenous children from the Stolen Generations; and between 7,000-10,000 former child migrants from Britain and Malta.

Forgotten Australians/ Care Leavers who were placed in institutional care had varying experiences. However, many were subject to social isolation and neglect, and in many cases emotional, physical and sexual abuse. As a result, spending time in institutional care as a child is associated with a range of negative social, economic and health outcomes in adulthood. Aged care has been identified as an area of significant anxiety for this group of people, given their previous experiences in institutional care - the prospect of going into aged care, specifically residential and palliative care, represents another experience of institutionalised care and can be especially traumatic for those still suffering the life-long consequences of abuse and neglect.

Barriers to Care

Given their previous experiences, as they age – in many cases prematurely and with multiple health conditions - Forgotten Australians/Care Leavers are aware that their past experiences have resulted in significant barriers to support, including:

- Lack of awareness and understanding of the aged care sector, and confusion about how to seek aged care support
- Distrust of institutional settings, health systems and government
- A lack of understanding by aged care providers about trauma, its impact, and the past experiences of Forgotten Australians/Care Leavers
- A lack of perceived and real flexibility in institutional settings such as hospitals and aged care facilities
- The lifelong impact of Forgotten Australians/Care Leavers' past trauma, including:
 - Low literacy levels for some, with difficulty filling out forms and feeling ashamed
 - Not wanting to be separated from a loved companion (e.g. pet)
 - Fear of not “fitting in”
 - Having to keep repeating life stories
 - Feeling trapped and out of control
 - Loss of identity, independence and privacy
 - Fear of having to abide by a strict regimen, e.g. set mealtimes

The first phase of the Real Care the Second Time Around project, worked with Forgotten Australians/Care Leavers to develop relevant information and communication processes about the range of ageing services available. Priority areas included end of life planning, navigating access to home care and residential aged care services, consumer rights, advocacy, complaints resolution processes and Lived Experience training. This phase also focussed on trialling workshops designed with and evaluated by Forgotten Australians/Care Leavers and the development of ongoing resources.

Read the Helping Hand Real Care the Second Time Around Position Statement

<https://www.helpinghand.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Positioning-Statement-Forgotten-Australians.pdf>

Read the Helping Hand Real Care the Second Time Around TOP 10 Questions for Forgotten Australians / Care Leavers to ask when looking for residential aged care accommodation

The second phase of the project is being developed in conjunction with research undertaken by Flinders University as part of their Safe and Inclusive Aged Care for Forgotten Australians/Care Leavers' Report and Recommendations. These recommendations (published in October 2020) identified recommendations from their project that can be trialled and evaluated in both home and residential aged care settings. This work will be in partnership with Relationships Australia South Australia, the main providers of assistance to Forgotten Australians/Care Leavers, who is developing a training package on trauma-informed care. The training will be "rolled out" to Helping Hand Aged Care Home Care Services and residential aged care staff at 2 sites from May-June 2021.

The Real Care the Second Time Around Project has a Program Manager – Fran Lovell and Project Officer, Meg Schwarz. Meg identifies as a Forgotten Australian/Care Leaver and is a member of CLAN.

If you would like to know more about the project, you are welcome to contact Fran or Meg on (08) 8224 7871 / 8224 7813.

This project is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health from the Dementia and Aged Care Services fund.