

Find and Connect Service Scoping Study 2010

The views of Forgotten Australians, former child migrants, members of the Stolen Generations and other care leavers

During the Scoping Study for the proposed Find and Connect Service, we spoke to many Forgotten Australians, former child migrants, members of the Stolen Generations and other care leavers.

The following is a summary of some of the many things you told us. Many of these views and comments have been used in putting together the report of the Find and Connect Scoping Study. Other views summarised below are not used in that report, as they are not directly relevant to the actual Find and Connect Service. However all comments will be passed on to the persons who are eventually providing the service, so that they are aware of what Forgotten Australians, former child migrants and other care leavers told us about a variety of issues important to you.

Note that the following are simply notes about what you said – we have not provided analysis or comment here. Also, as these are the ‘raw’ comments received during the focus groups and other consultations, they include opposing views about the same issues.

1. Making contact with, and publicising, the Find and Connect service

- Demand for the service? “Will there ever!”; Demand for the service will be massive
- Word has to be gotten out quickly, as time is of the essence.
- It may take some people months or even years to actually make contact and then see it through; Some elderly people may never have told anyone; People will be thinking ‘Will I, won’t I’, see the advertising and ‘give it a go’; Floodgates will open if they think they can get in touch with family, if they know about the service; Care leavers had such inadequate childhoods, they have so many issues, they will contact the service
- Use a documentary or something to get the message out about the website; Have an advertising campaign; Use ‘short and snappy’ community TV ads
- Use existing publications and services, for example, seniors magazines, government service networks like Centrelink, Lotus Place newsletter, existing service providers, mass media, TV, ABC TV News station, *Find my Family* TV show, hospitals, correctional facilities, Community Care, Meals on Wheels, homelessness services (as 25% of homeless people in Brisbane are Forgotten Australians) to advertise the service
- Use radio to promote the service and get people to talk about their experiences All associated services should be called ‘Find and Connect’ so people know that’s the starting point wherever they are in Australia and the contact details should be at the front of the phone book in the ‘help’ section
- Advertise internationally too
- What provision will be made for people who do not have internet access? How will they know about the service?

2. The need for, and rights to, information

- “This is a human right, to know where you come from” it’s a national obligation of past providers
- Allow care leavers to get access to their (deceased) parents’ war records and the medals

- “I have a problem that someone in the government gets my file to see it all and I don’t”
- Needs to be user-informed, take DOCS out of the equation
- Number 1 issue for identity is getting a birth certificate
- Record holders should help people to work out their movements in their childhood (eg not sure when placed where or where placed), especially government by searching school records to help piece together the history
- “...in the past 12 months, I have been trying to find some of the answers so that my father and his sister both in their 80s can get some closure before they pass away.”
- “I find it hard for people to listen to me. I need to know and need your HELP to find my family please.”
- “My birth mother is now deceased and I want to find what happened to her from birth. I have inherited my mother’s rights to apply for information but there is no centralised place to find records. As a child of adoption you always have a natural instinct of wondering where you came from. I would like to locate my mother’s family and I think the records to help people search should be available...I have never been able to access information about who or why she was put into an orphanage. This information and a support worker should be available to help families connect with their past. I feel my birth mother has no history and that makes me sad! Please help families connect with their past.”
- “How much more can we put up with. We have lost so much and we are still the losers. They are my only family in Australia. Who am I and where is my family? My children and I need to know my fathers and my beginning as we have lost everything. Please help us find my family as it is so important.”
- “Individuals should have the right to choose what information about them should be available for research purposes etc or for public knowledge. Individuals should have the right to make part or whole information available - where requested, names should be withheld but all other information may be available.”

3. Experiences in trying to obtain own records

- Proving who you are is a huge barrier for some people
- Success: “It took three weeks and they sent 300 pages”
- “If you weren’t a state ward the records are willy-nilly.”
- “For most people there are two lots of files - a lot of people don’t realise this. The 1800 people need to be aware of it.”
- Some people in the group were unhappy about the small amount of information they received in their records but one person got 160 pages from the Department
- Value of the information in the file is low (as there isn’t much recorded)
- Queensland FOI takes a long time to process requests, plus FOI told one person their record was lost in the flood and a couple of months later, 4 pages turned up; A lack of response to requests for information was mentioned, particularly the turnaround time in NSW (waiting 2 years)
- Records were released with the person’s ward number which just brought back bad memories
- Big problems getting health, hospital and education records as they are destroyed after a certain time period
- “Nothing (in the file) was in chronological order and there were many different styles of handwriting...it would be virtually impossible for those with literacy difficulties to decipher their file material”
- Concern raised about restrictions on information due to privacy legislation

- Re access to records...attendees said that 20 years ago it was much easier and quicker to access records however now there is usually a 6 to 12 month process involved with obtaining records due to FOI and privacy legislation
- Significant issues for a few members of one focus group with access to medical records especially those who were subject to drug testing, which was a problem for one woman when issues occurred during her pregnancy
- Access to educational records also problematic due to disorganised and/or lack of information
- Many Forgotten Australians were not on the electoral roll due to homelessness and other issues so it can be limited in terms of tracing. Also, cumbersome because you have to write information down as you're finding it..."this process of searching is more complex because knowledge base is minimal."
- Name changes present another difficulty
- "I have had the unfortunate experience of trying to obtain records through DOCS in New South Wales, a more intimidating experience you could never imagine. This was extremely traumatising and humiliating to say the least. I finally received some records after 3 1/2 years with a great deal of information 'blacked out' and so many errors. I found a contact at FOI in Sydney who was extremely helpful, but still took 3 months to give me only a part of the information required."
- Re record keeping: on first request, one person only got an 'index card' and then through an FOI request associated with a State Inquiry, she got hundreds of pages that contained lots of 'blacked out' areas. She had an hour or so with a social worker from Post Care Services when the records were released. "I was upset and angry that information deleted from my copy of the file was contained in the (inquiry) report."
- "Qld FOI told me that they would release my records free to DVD, but I would have to pay for a hard copy."
- FOI said no records but MacKillop found some; The MacKillop process is excellent, know how to keep searching, where to start, how to keep going, same worker
- "I have helped several people obtain records through FOI, but it is a long and arduous process, will this improve?"

4. About where the records are / could be located

- Pass a federal law to say "Hand them (the records) in."
- Pass a law to protect the records as soon as possible
- Legislate that the records are kept in the one place. All record holdings for care providers should be centralised. All files should be scanned so they are in the one place.
- Database needed in one place
- "Commonwealth needs to claim ownership and store the files together in one place."
- Some files are in NZ - St Anne's in Broken Hill was run by an order of nuns now only in NZ, who say they have the file there. They should be returned to Australia.
- Put all the records held by nuns together in Canberra, using this Federal money
- Collate the information in daily logs and other records for each individual

5. About records being destroyed / withheld / not found / not organised

- Story of file held in a detention centre that was made available to a research student, but not to the Forgotten Australian, who was told it was 'restricted' and heard they were now to be made public
- List all of the institutions in the guide to record holdings - A person wasn't believed until Leonie Sheedy eventually found mention of the place in an old booklet. And

Connecting Kin, for example, has lots of homes missing from it, for example, if they said the records are missing.

- Keep looking for the history to follow up on orphanages, especially small ones, that people have never heard of.
- When asked about which organisations say there are no records, responses were Legacy Homes, Red Cross homes, Salvation Army, Sisters of Mercy, Catholics (little records)
- There is widespread perception that there are hidden records
- Re Church records: “Just because you’re told there are no files, don’t always believe them.” “They must exist!” “We know they have the files; they won’t give them up.” “They MUST have records and they are not releasing them to people for fear of litigation and because they sometimes find records later. They should just give up the information even if it does talk about abuse - people were disadvantaged in their victim impact statements for redress because they couldn’t get their ‘church’ records.” “Christian Brothers told people they were allowed to destroy the records after 7 years so they did.” Before the Find and Connect Service is established, legislation is needed to DIRECT the churches to ‘give the files up’
- Re government records: want to know if it really true that state government records were destroyed eg because of mould. “The State government is going to have to come clean re what records they have”; Needs to be national legislation covering entitlements to child welfare records
- Sometimes with searching, they say there are no records but they send you a file number anyway
- And where are the educational and medical records from the churches?
- “What if the churches destroy the records when we ask for them?”
- Many expressed anger that any records at all had been destroyed. Most did not believe that records did not exist or were not provided as “there must have been records” like the daily log one person knew of where he was placed. Where records no longer exist, especially if they were destroyed, the name of person making the decision, the details of the missing records and the reason for the decision should be on the website.
- Children placed privately kept being moved around by the nuns to stop the government getting the children
- Another person said “they want us to write stories of past histories....how can we do this with lost records”. He voiced frustration with this, which was added to further by others in the group.
- “Please tell the west aussies how do we find our files when the childrens homes have destroyed or hidden them and the government is backing them ...please don’t promise a forgotten australian that they can find some files, when they can’t ...we have been hurt enough”
- “When are organizations going to tell the truth? When are Organization going to HELP us?”
- When looking for her records, one woman was told that although most of the records had been destroyed in a fire there were a couple of boxes that weren’t collated but she could look through. Her concern is that there is probably more of these ‘boxes’ lying around but without explicit encouragement to hand them over for collation, then they will always remain hidden; Needs to be someone who continues to do the work to get the past providers on board with the Find and Connect Service. “They [some past providers] need to be shamed into it.”
- “Need to be very thorough to find hidden information”
- “It will be interesting to see how this service will obtain records from private institutions, before my brothers, sister and I were made Wards of the State we were placed in many private church run institutions who will not release records.”

- “I consider it an excellent innovation as it is very very difficult to locate all places records may or may not be kept. Or indeed even if records exist but even then may not be available to individual persons.”

6. The need for information about / to locate family members

- “This will all take years. It has to happen immediately. If it had been available earlier I could have met my sister.”; Hopes that the service speeds up some tracing and connecting as people are old, unwell etc
- “They owe us an identity”
- People need to make contact so “you know who you are and where you’re from”
- There’s not currently lots of services for finding family – not really a lot of previous effort. AFA members ourselves need the service. Not just the ‘find’, but help with the ‘connecting’ – “We don’t know how.” It’s timely that it is coming now.
- Provide tracing assistance / access to records held overseas - UK, Malta, USA
- Hand over the only copy of the file - government should not keep the file as government broke up the family
- Need to have a name for the starting point
- When a brick wall is hit, need people to go out on the streets and do the leg work ie not in the office, investigative work. Do this to get around the privacy barriers
- Help people to search internationally as, in addition to child migrants, other care leavers have connections overseas (eg adoptions)
- The Centrelink system worked well
- “While I have made contact with my family, (an adopted sister found me about 24 years ago), my husband has not been able to find anyone from his family.”
- “My brother passed away last year before I could obtain his records, I have a small amount of them now - too late for him.”

7. Access to ‘third party’ records

- The blackened spaces are often their brothers and sisters. “Before (the inquiries) people were getting the full file.”
- Secrets have caused distress – “people think, it’s a cover-up”
- Rights through FOI need to be reviewed - “It’s a crock of shit”
- How the Privacy legislation is applied varies greatly across organisations / government departments; Australia goes over the top with privacy. “None of that rubbish in England – can search any of the family (through birth records)”; Privacy barriers need to be relaxed
- FOI: big problem with accessing third party information, for example, trying to get information about deceased parents, but can’t get anything from the government; Descendants wishing to locate info often have very little to start with, as they are not first person it’s almost impossible for them to access any records
- Relax ID requirements as the needs and circumstances of Forgotten Australians are ‘out of the box’
- Lack of, or gaps, in information provided: Many spoke of getting their care records and names, paragraphs, slabs etc that had been ‘blacked out’. Need assistance to understand why that has happened; While not supporting it, there was some understanding of the reason why this happens but the deletions are inconsistent and not helpful to people; Deleting material when the person is deceased – “It’s detrimental to health by not knowing. If you can’t give access to gaps, build a hole and put us in it.”; Don’t ‘black out’ names!
- Have a ‘right to know’ that information about siblings and family, it was said the information “wouldn’t interest me”; Another person said while some information in

her ward record had been deleted, a reference to her father's mental illness was left in which was unnecessarily distressing and brought it all back again

- Births Deaths and Marriages: Birth certificates – can't get certificates of parents; A lot have their own files, but need copies of death certificates, for example. They get handed the file and nothing else; "To obtain information about my parents is even more difficult, especially my mother who was born and died in Queensland, the cost of applying for the certificates is prohibitive and because I cannot guarantee her correct name /s, I was told by Qld BDM that it probably wasn't worth my while trying because it would take too long even though I have her place and date of death. Typical government response that most of us Forgotten Australians, Care Leavers have had to accept and fight against for many years."; Example given where person was aware of half siblings through their ward file but can't access any of their records; There should be no charge for certificates of third parties
- Searching for non family members: "many formed familial like relationships with other children whilst in care – often these relationships were closer ties than birth families"; "I was fostered for seven years – yet FOI said I couldn't get their names and information."
- One woman talked about having lived her life thinking some things, but her father's file told other very important information. The file was 'sat on'. People need to know the information, so they can, for example, forgive their parents.

8. The need for specialist support and understanding (including support when records are released and in relation to reunion)

- There are many places to check to trace and locate family and care leavers need coordinated assistance to do this; Support required to trace and access records is highly specialised so whoever is employed must have specialist skills in this area. These people would need to have high level search abilities and also the ability to guide people on how to locate their records. Whatever organisations are funded to provide support must have the capacity to do exactly that.
- Provide regular meaningful updates about the progress of record searches; Keep care leavers in the loop while waiting for records - get a letter "Information is the big thing – it's what's been withheld all these years and it is empowering"
- Prioritise need: agreement that health status, age and pending court case should be taken into account; There should be doctor's report if the health matter is urgent and court case if there is a need for past history or family details
- "Information can be very disturbing – you can't know what a particular piece of information will mean to the particular individual. It can be devastating..."; Access to face to face support is critical particularly when a person gets their file. Help with deciphering material is critical; People need to be warned "You're going into deep water and if you don't want to drown, here is your life-raft"; "There's an 'extreme isolation' when exploring one's history and support is needed"
- "When you receive your files you are really protective of them so you wouldn't want to send them away to someone for their opinion on what they all mean, however someone sitting with you to go through it all would be invaluable."When there's inaccurate information in the file, you can't get it out of your head
- Need preparation to get records
- Support is morale boosting
- Service should use a checklist eg are counselling supports in place before reading records and counselling should be mandatory
- "Everybody is seeking reunion, even if they don't say so at first and getting records is the gateway to reunion. It's safer to ask for records."
- "Needs to be a major push for centralisation in the whole (records) system"

- Care leavers need coaching / mentoring by peers for reunions and it'd be good if there was a mediator / someone with negotiation skills at reunions because of the aggression and anger; There could be a peer at the reunion to provide support as they have shared the same experiences and this would help with dealing with assumptions eg mother just gave away the baby
- The first reunion is the most important so need a lot of preparation to deal with emotions (eg anger, guilt, sadness) before the reunion and hold it in a nice, neutral place - not a 'cold connection'; Need to provide emotional support – connecting with long lost relatives is complex and intermediary professionals are needed; Need support to 'connect', at reunion and ongoing; Support for people rejected by their "biologicals"; Need pre-reunion counselling because siblings think they are only after a share of the estate, siblings disown them, need help with communication as there has been no 'bonding'; When siblings reject or renege on family contact, it can be very traumatizing and supports are needed to make contact with siblings or if they make contact and to deal with the (good or bad) outcome
- "This is an extremely emotional time and issues of grief and loss come up all the time. Having support workers and counsellors is a really good idea. People can become very depressed and anxious to say the least, not only when finding a relative, but also when they can't find them"
- Guarantee services continue after reunions especially if the family is not interested in the care leaver; Ongoing support needed for 'meets and greets' and emotional support for managing and maintaining connections. "The end is not getting the records or even re-connecting with family - needs go on and on and change."
- Number 1 principle is 'independence' – critical to a positive family reunion, 'no association with past in a negative way', provide a therapeutic safety net from past perpetrators
- A personal barrier is the ability to speak and to be acknowledged, so need supports when this happens – ongoing, in the community
- Need records to get a passport
- Redress might be a trigger to getting records
- See 'care' in the context of the time
- "Professional community should be encouraging people to get assistance with the search"
- Specific issues for care leavers living in regional areas - main factor is the high level of isolation brought about by lack of internet access, transport, low socio-economic levels
- Particular support required for Forgotten Australians who are in prison and more broadly for those "caught up in the legal system". This is particularly required when Legal Aid rejects application
- "Some of the things you will need to be a success in this field of study are knowledge that can only be gained by having lived the life of a child in an institution, then you have to have raised yourself to a point of understanding, compassion, with a state of grace and wisdom that can forgive and accept self and all things that you have no control over, you will need a set of values that you will give your all to all without question. If you are a person with such qualification I'd love to meet you."

9. Comments about how the support services should operate

- Urgency: "This has to happen yesterday. We'll all be dead waiting – need to double-up on the people processing applications. "Some have missed out (on meeting relatives) by as little as two weeks."
- Need a care leaver on site at the support services. "It's a cultural thing, expect cultural understanding (of care leaver issues)". Support by peers is very important

given the 'shared experience' so need room for peer support in the service and in the goal of a 'resource centre' for care leavers; J wants to be trained, as well as other Forgotten Australians, so she / they can be a part of the service. She wants to 'give her experience to help others'; Roles include as consultants to the service/s across Australia, being trained to do initial contact on the 1800#, and as counsellors

- Well selected, well trained, well supported staff; Background / life issues before uni degrees (for support persons); Being removed is a 'culturally specific experience' and so this experience should be reflected in workers having a care background
- Consistent workers for when making contact, with substitutes for when the main worker is away; Don't want turnover of workers; The same worker, with a nominated backup worker for when they are away or leave, should deal with a care leaver to provide continuity and trust, which care leavers did not have in their care experience. Workers should not be on time-limited contracts; Consistency of workers is important and also providing ongoing support following connection with family members. Need professional people to assist in nurturing this relationship
- There should be a standard form and that it should only have to be filled out once so that once you're on the list, you stay on the list and if they contact any agency, their name is already known; "I want to walk in and say I'm fed up and not fill any more forms out." Make allowances for literacy and numeracy levels; "Fed up with having to prove who we are all the time" so just one form for registration
- "You get sick of going over it again and again"
- Should be a 'one stop shop' so there is a less stress for the care leaver. The initiative is supposed to be about preventative health so it should be easy and helpful for care leavers to use, including reducing the emotional and financial costs associated with being in care and accessing records; Help needs to be 'immediate' and effective eg getting the form and help to fill it out; Service has to be a 'complete service' that fits to the individual eg do search or not do the search; Provide information about where to go for 'help'; Liaise with the state government about getting records, not make the care leaver chase the forms etc; Care leavers should only have to make contact with Find and Connect once, and Find and Connect contacts other record holders and coordinates retrieval of records
- Important to be able to control the pace of the search
- Language around the issues is very important with terms such as 'care provider', 'care' and 'care leaver' often being found offensive – there was no 'care'.
- Simplify ID requirements and only provide ID once. People have changed their names for lots of reasons including because they did not want to be called the name they were 'abused under'
- "Trust is a must"
- Face to face support is particularly crucial because of the high level of disengagement from the mainstream (media, social networks).
- Care leavers have often moved from major city centres [to regional areas] to leave their past memories behind but the issue is that it is more difficult for them to access the type of support required because of their levels of isolation and lack of infrastructure (services and transport)
- Use existing support groups to provide the support
- Some care leavers don't know the questions to ask because they don't really know what they're looking for, and records are not in one government or non-government place
- A former child migrant spoke of her experiences of finding her family and the counselling she required in this process. She spoke of the trust she felt in the worker at the first point of contact and this was due to the respectful way she was treated. She also said it was important for her not to be overwhelmed with too much info and the counsellor was able to assist in a way that was the right pace for this person.

- Will need referrals to related supports that meet the needs of the Forgotten Australians and child migrants and links to healing sites; Specialised support needed especially for men about sexual abuse.

10. Comments about the counselling services

- Counselling – free, choice available, for as long as needed; Flexible / negotiable / able to dip in and out of counselling / consistent counsellor / not having to constantly go back to the GP
- Need specialised counsellors as this area is ‘new’ and Forgotten Australians must teach the counsellors; Need to be skilled at trauma counselling, post traumatic stress disorders
- Counsellors don’t have to have this (care) experience to understand; Counsellors need education about working with care leavers which must happen before the service commences; For some people who had attended counselling, they were concerned about counsellors’ lack of understanding of the context for Forgotten Australians and therefore were unable to respond appropriately; Differing views expressed about qualified verses life-experience
- Against counsellors being Forgotten Australians - “They add their crap onto your crap”
- Counselling is best face to face from people who have counselling expertise
- Support and counselling should be provided by the same person
- Support and counselling need to take account of care leavers’ ‘fear’ and that they are often ‘misunderstood’
- Counsellors should not be from an organisation that was reasonably involved in the abuse to Forgotten Australians
- Need counselling / help for children of care leavers as they were not treated as well as they should have been by their care leaver parents

11. Comments about how the website and 1800 number should operate

- Agreement about 4 distinct groups of people accessing the service: the group who want to do their own searching, the group who don’t want to search, the group who want some assistance, and the group who want someone to do it all for them. The view was that the 1800 number and website need to accommodate the needs of all of these groups of people and the capacity to access specialist expertise
- Advertise the 1800 number in / by Centrelink, libraries, Housing, hospitals; It needs to get to remote and isolated places; Prisoners need access too
- 1800 number has to operate outside of business hours; Take account of the time differences across Australia; A single number that doesn’t attract any costs to the user, even mobile calls; If the use of mobile phones creates costs then advertise this
- Operating 24/7: Should be a 24 hour service in case a care leaver wants to talk about committing suicide although it was acknowledged that there were other crisis services that could be contacted in those circumstances; Would allow calls to be accepted and returned to the high number of people contacting the Service - many / any thing will prompt a care leaver to contact the service
- Will need to cope with calls that are not strictly ‘Find and Connect Service’ eg housing problems related to person’s situation; People will contact the service in crisis / emergencies eg financial needs
- The people answering the calls need training and counselling skills as care leavers get angry and “working with people is one of the hardest jobs you can find”. They’ll need to know about all of the different institutions, have people skills; The service

should be provided by 'peer people' ie care leavers and former child migrants so that the people know what they are talking about

- Want a real person to answer and describe the full range of available services so callers know where they could be directed, rather than them having to say what they want; Provide information so people will know what's available, not have to know what they want
- Definitely no message that has to be written down; No number pushing or having to speak to an automated voice; Calling represents a stage in life - "freedom of coming out" so there can't be a recorded message; No answering machine or 'press 2 if...'
- Keep a record of callers / calls to the service as people are likely to ring more than once before they actually start the tracing process, plus continuity across staff
- Should be a central number answered in each state, depending on the number called from, direct the call to that state call centre, with enough staff to cope with the expected high volume calls
- Must ring back if / when service says it will
- Focus on referrals / action, not 'dilly dallying' with counselling and checking with people about how they are getting on; Refer straight away before the person loses interest and the referral agency will have to act straight away too
- "The 1800 number is a good idea and you would probably need kits of information which you can send out to people teaching them how to get started. Maybe people could even come together in small groups to help each other."
- The website - "Forget it"; These are older people so might not use a website; Some people do not have access to a computer but recognised that others would use the website; "Care leavers don't have email"
- "Why is another website required when the CLAN website is so good?"
- Make access to the website free, like Bigpond unmetered sites
- Need diverse entry points to search the website
- Website needs to be user friendly; Take care with the language as there are literacy issues and don't make it that people have to write / spell to contact the service; Have links, contacts, where to find information, limitations to records!!; Message board / skype / twitter
- Facility for making suggestions about how to improve the website
- "Databases don't find people – they are a start, but not the end"
- Need access to computers in a private place but also need the skills to use a computer; Care leavers should get free, in-home tutoring to use computers and the website, plus a free computer as it is difficult and not private to use computers say in a public library etc. Needs to be 'in-home' for the privacy of accessing the site and distrust of public computers. "Lotus Place computers are ok but not private."; Care leavers deserve training about how to use the site
- Include information about how to search for records, for example, electoral rolls, and other public documents;
- "In most cases individuals will require assistance in searching for records. Also a step by step guide how to and what they may expect, (feelings), information (or lack), contacting family members (barriers, privacy etc)."
- Develop a register with institution-specific sources about where records are held for that institution; List all their various name changes, relevant dates and who operated the institution; Details of the legislation under which children were placed in 'care'; A brief outline of welfare / social history
- National centralised database would be good but privacy legislation is an obvious barrier so would need to involve legislative change; "Since there are only 500,000 care leavers, put each name on the website attached to all of that person's records";
- "Often language and terminology found in records contains terms, and descriptions specific to the authority(s) in whose care the individual was placed. These terms may

be familiar in the first instance, however subsequent generations or others may be unfamiliar with these terms and definitions. Suggestion: readers guide.”

- Importance of verification of identity for database access
- Data-files which group people could be a way of matching siblings who are searching

12. The need for financial support

- Mentioned often was the importance of support and funding to prepare for reunions (eg phone calls) and for the actual reunion - the ‘connect’ aspect of the service
- Financial support needed for domestic and international travel with financial assistance for partners / support person to accompany care leavers to reunions
- “Want a Department of Care Survivors” – real acknowledgement – the government was responsible and they need to be accountable today
- “Need to feel that we matter”
- Financial support to chase records
- Financial and other assistance for former child migrants with UK registry and court costs to find out about siblings

13. Places that do or may hold relevant information/records

- Have to be very skilled at searching, eg through newspapers and archives, possible narratives, and to follow through on stories, census etc etc
- Every service should have had a visitor’s book – it was required by law
- Social Security: “the State had to fill in a form for Social Security showing when a child was discharged from an institution”
- Military, war, medical, child endowment, Medicare, dental, mental health, corrective services records
- Hospital records - this information can often help organise in chronological order the other information you have – it gives dates, addresses
- Commonwealth records in the National Archives and in each State/territory: child migrant selection documents, ship manifests, short birth certificate, documents about health, IQ etc
- Births Deaths and Marriages information but different legislation in each state
- National Library of Australia - Australian newspapers - can search by name of home, or person’s name etc to retrieve articles and photos
- Church of the Latter Day Saints - extensive funeral records
- Unmarked graves: how to identify whether they are a member of your family and the counselling required when this is the case. Cemeteries have records with the identity of those in the unmarked graves but will not release this information. Significant trauma associated with this when there is a high likelihood that one of the sites could have a family member buried there
- Re a National Register of Ex Workers (from facilities that accommodated care leavers and / or other agencies): understand the issues surrounding this suggestion but believes that these people would voluntarily give this information if they realised how important it might be - “a tiny piece of information can sometimes lead to a lot more information”. A worker might remember aspects that are not found in any file material
- Free access as they have in the Society of Australian Genealogists where you can book to use a site such as Ancestry.com
- Photo sources: archives of companies that held children’s activities eg RACQ, WA Peters Ice cream, Belford’s Pies in SA
- GI Link - lots of children in care were fathered by US servicemen

- Institutional records (dormitory lists, muster lists, punishment books, etc). These records are not available for public access (70 year restriction) but do contain valuable information that needs to be collected and collated
- State libraries - assistance with ancestry searches

14. Comment about which agencies should / should not operate Find and Connect services (and about accessing records from past providers)

- Forgotten Australians might not want to be in touch with churches. A lot of people DO want to go back to the institution (an ex Wesley Dalmar girl) and some do not want to go back to where they were brought up. A former child migrant referred to the usefulness of being shown around a Catholic girl's home where she had lived by a Sister
- It's a 'conflict of interest' for professionals who did removals or adoptions in their career, as they did in the 1970s, to provide 'current day (post care or post adoption) services'
- Don't duplicate existing tracing / finding agencies / people
- A NGO that is not a past provider should operate Find and Connect, in conjunction with care leavers and others; There should be a distance between past providers and service providers to care leavers now
- Post care services are best not provided by government
- "Have to get rid of biases" about the churches and charities eg if think Salvation Army is wonderful, need to think again.
- Government cannot be trusted to link up families
- The \$26.5M will be chewed up in administration and set-up and FaHCSIA must be held accountable for the service as they are 'part of the history' of how Forgotten Australians are in the situation they're in. The money will go to services, they are 'growing financially' but not Forgotten Australians who aren't getting financial benefits
- Support for resources going to the Child Migrants Trust; "I strongly recommend Child Migrants Trust as the most suitable organisation for this purpose. The Trust has been of great assistance and support to me and has always conducted itself in professional and thoroughly responsible manner. I believe that they are singularly best suited to provide the services required for this purpose. Please ensure that Child Migrants Trust is nominated and strongly supported as the most suitable provider in this case."
- It's a state responsibility to clean up their own files and the Find and Connect money shouldn't be used for this purpose
- Allocate some of the funds to processing the backlog in requests using someone qualified to do the searching
- Definitely not St Josephs
- "Wouldn't want to see Link-Up telling people how to do it when they've had issues delivering"
- Give additional funds to Post Care Services as they already have the connections, but they would need to service South Australia, not just Adelaide
- Concern expressed about not duplicating what already exists and works, for example, CBERs, "just give them more"
- From one focus group: unanimous that CLAN should not get any of the funds as they have had heaps and South Australians have had little return; "I can honestly say that the work all the people at CLAN and all the support team do is fantastic and had CLAN been given the funds needed in the past your job would be very easy"
- It's a fact that the money will go to Micah, CLAN, Open Place, CMT. There needs to be transparency for where the funds go
- VANISH helped me

- “There is a lot of anger towards Relationships Australia and the funding they received. Forgotten Australians really want self determination over their lives, they just see it as the homes all over again someone with the resources that they have to beg for.”
- No support for funding going to the Salvos, Red Cross (‘need to open up their books), churches or government
- All the processes associated with the funding for the service should be ‘transparent and accountable’ - any past providers should have to show how they are helping care leavers today; how they are solving problems, not creating them. “CLAN is a national support and advocacy group but these agencies (past providers) do not even show their support by joining CLAN. The churches and others should have to show how they are making amends for the past.”
- “Service agreements have to be tied up to making up for the past.”

15. Broad issues about the overall Find and Connect Service

- Has been waiting for and asking for a service like Find and Connect for a long time. It is ‘history making’; “Everywhere I turn there is strong interest in the project”; “A frequent question asked by most who make contact (ex Parra Girls) concerns the location of and access to records and I’m delighted that the Find and Connect Service is now underway.”
- Service has to be the same for care leavers across Australia as it was a national apology; There should be a national approach to ‘after care’, for example, the SA Post Care Service should not be restricted to people in care in SA as there are many people now living in SA who were in care in other jurisdictions; From a focus group: agreement that the entitlement to access and the same process should be national. “Anyone should be entitled to get their information”. There should be national register of wards.
- Increase understanding of the needs of Forgotten Australians in any new services / initiatives
- All matters re records / locating families / support / counselling should be free
- Don’t want to be a ‘number’ - care leavers have always been referred to by a ward number, so the service should not do this
- Don’t want the money gobbled up by social workers and counsellors – don’t want it mainly spent on wages
- Service needs to be in one place to get the hard work done, needs to have one person coordinating
- Have a bulletin / magazine for the service
- National standards about release and record keeping
- Code of practice for delivering the service, eg, legally binding that the information about care leavers cannot be used for research
- Involve care leavers in decision making about the Find and Connect Service contract/s; Have an ongoing reference group that includes Forgotten Australians, and meets say every six months to ensure it stays on track
- Accountability and transparency processes to monitor the funds
- Grievance process
- Supports now are government run and city based which means limited recognition and inclusion to people in the country
- The money can’t run out until everyone gets the finding / connecting they want – “don’t spend the \$25M in 4 months”
- A list should have been kept of people who made contact before the service starts so they could be at the top of the list when it actually starts
- Need passion and skill to be good at searching

- “Experience has shown that many of the present generation of Forgotten Australians have parents, grandparents or other family members who were also ‘in care’ as children. Equally surviving generations who were not in care themselves have forebears who were and since the Forgotten Australians Inquiry and the subsequent Apologies and media attention, these individuals feel more comfortable in tackling what had been previously a family secret. This particular group fall in the overlap between contemporary personal and family histories and genealogical interests. I appreciate that there needs to be a ‘cut off’ point however I feel that it may be of use to engage such organisations as the Society Of Genealogists (SAG) to cater for such inquiries within the context of the Find and Connect service.”
- Provision for misspelling of names, incorrect dates
- Need a special analysis team to examine, extract and interpret these (institutional records (dormitory lists, muster lists, punishment books, etc) sources
- Have a contact register for those wishing to make contact with others – like an adoption register

16. Other related issues

- Redress – told by psychologist time had run out – shouldn’t have a time limit
- Child Migrants Trust – only two people for the whole of Australia. Needs offices in other states
- Widespread support for, and mention of, Forgotten Australians deserving a Gold Card
- Care leavers should have access to an agency like the Child Support Agency as part of the Apology.
- Support for having a Guardian, like the Children’s Commissioner, for Forgotten Australians - the Children’s Commissioner role should be broadened to people over 18 and if not, there should be someone for people over 18 years
- Care Leavers were not supported as children so should be supported now as adults with health services, state funerals, retirement village / hostel, legal representation better services generally and/or with more money
- Find and Connect Service should provide emergency relief and interest free loans
- More doctors need to know about Forgotten Australians; Understanding the care experience and working with care leavers should be a part of social work and human services training and for all of the Find and Connect Service and associated workers
- An education campaign about Forgotten Australians so people know
- “How are you going to identify the people that require this service? I am not sure you have any idea of the numbers of people that require this service. I have long been an advocate of at least a question being placed on Government Forms or even the Census that we all complete every 10 years or so to identify us.”
- “I have to pay to become an Australian” (former child migrant)
- Need something like the Child Migrants Trust in WA for Forgotten Australians
- Churches have the money and properties, so could use the money for compensation and role in the Find and Connect Service
- B and her siblings were accommodated at the same home where they were all given temporary batch numbers. B was the only child in the family group who went into care. There is no redress possible for her siblings because there is no official record of them being at the home even though B knows they were and some of her records refer to them
- The Find and Connect Service should be able to cross reference with the National Register of Sex Offenders (if it ever exists). Obviously a sensitive issue, but framed around knowing you weren’t the only one it happened to.

- Have a more reasonable time (eg 12 months) for lodging objections about FOI decisions. Going through records takes a long time
- Fees for subscribing to some internet useful sites
- If an original letter is held on a child's ward file or other care record, the original should be given the person, not a copy - these are not the property of the organisation
- Need an after care resource centre in Western Australia with peer support, access to counsellors, information, life skills assistance (eg Centrelink, banking, solicitors / Legal Aid, computers)
- "Service agreements have to be tied up to making up for the past", for example, where past providers are providing aged care.