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**Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services
and Indigenous Affairs**

SPEECH

**Opening of *Inside, Life in children's homes and institutions*
Second Anniversary of the National Apology to the Forgotten
Australians and Former Child Migrants
National Museum of Australia, Canberra
15 November 2011**

Thank you, Andrew [Sayers, Director of the National Museum of Australia].

I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, and their elders past and present.

I would also like to acknowledge Danny Gilbert and Jack Thompson.

I would like to acknowledge the survivors, some of whom are with us tonight. Survivors, like Caroline Carroll, Harold Haig, Jim Luthy and Joanna Penglase who I toured the exhibition with earlier today.

And those who cannot be here today - Leonie Sheedy, Margaret Humphreys and Former Senator Andrew Murray.

Those who have done so much to shed a light on your experiences in institutions.

Today we add to these advocates the National Museum of Australia.

Dr Mike Pickering, Dr Jay Arthur and Dr Adele Chynoweth have curated this exhibition and joined the ranks of those who have brought the stories of the Forgotten Australians and former Child Migrants to light.

Inside. Life in Children's Homes and Institutions tells the stories that have for too long remained untold.

They are told with a beautifully accurate, but chilling, poignancy.

Their telling in itself, is important.

Through this exhibition, these stories will form part of the patchwork of our national memory, now and into the future.

Because what happened to these children must be acknowledged, confronted and understood.

And because what happened to these children must never happen again.

Hiding these stories from ourselves has gone on for long enough.

Two years ago tomorrow, the Australian Government acknowledged the Forgotten Australians and the former Child Migrants, and your experiences.

We said sorry.

Sorry for the brutality and the injustices inflicted on you, as children, who were placed in our care.

And sorry for the lack of love, of warmth and affection which you deserved, just like all children.

We said we believe you. We acknowledge what happened was real.

We are sorry that you were forgotten. But you are now remembered.

The apology opened up the hearts and ears of a nation to your stories.

Your stories – along with your courage and your determination – led to the Apology. They have also led to this exhibition.

'Inside' will make certain that the stories of the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants will be heard and not forgotten.

And the Oral History Project, which records the stories of the survivors, will ensure they are preserved in perpetuity in our National Library.

The reality for many survivors is however, that their story is still unfolding.

Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants have told us of the deep scars, the terrible emptiness of loss of family and the profound impact this continues to have on their lives.

We are supporting CLAN, the Alliance of Forgotten Australians and the International Association of Former Child Migrants and their Families to continue vital counselling and advocacy work and social connections programs.

And we are establishing a national Find and Connect service to provide Australia-wide coordinated family tracing and support services.

Tonight I am pleased to announce further progress on the Find and Connect service.

The national Find and Connect web resource to help care leavers search for their records has today gone live.

This resource will grow and build over time.

With your help it will become a comprehensive and critical resource for care leavers searching for their own records, for family and friends and for information about their childhoods.

I am also pleased to announce a new National Find and Connect Consultative Forum.

The Forum will bring together care leaver advocates, service providers and state and territory governments to guide the Find and Connect projects and services to make sure they are working for care leavers.

Unearthing your stories is critical for care leavers – to know your own history, who you are and who brought you into this world.

Telling these stories allows us all to recognise your experience, and to understand how badly we as a nation let you down.

We never want to see the neglect and trauma experienced by the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants repeated.

There is a story of a small teddy bear that features in this exhibition.

Jeanette Blick owned this teddy – but as soon as it was given to her, it was taken away.

Jeanette wasn't allowed to cuddle her teddy at night.

It is so symbolic of the harshness and brutality – and also of the absence of love and warmth in children's lives.

Posted underneath Jeanette's story on the website for this exhibition is this note:

Aunty Jeanette - You and Aunty Pat give us all strength by not only surviving what you have been through but also being brave enough to face it and bring it into the light for all to see - stay strong!

Strength and courage define the survivors, and allow your stories to be told.

We hope that through this exhibition, more survivors find the strength to tell their stories.

And that through this exhibition, we as a nation find the strength to confront this dark chapter of our past and strengthen our resolve to never, ever let this happen again.

This resolve will be our act of remembering.

And to each of you, your stories, will never be forgotten.

Six years ago the Care Leavers Australia Network, CLAN, called for this exhibition.

Let our histories be visible, CLAN wrote in its submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Forgotten Australians.

Get the dinosaurs out of the Australian museum ... and dedicate it to orphanages and children.

I'm pleased to launch this exhibition, and to dedicate it to those children.