

The Forgotten Australians 15/11/10

15/11/2010

▶ **Tuesday November 16**

Sydney Morning Herald, 15/11/10, TV Guide, Page 8
By: Nick Ga-Vin

Article Information

Item ID: 00083132533
Circulation: 211,066
Number of words: 408

▶ **Se revealed**

Bendigo Advertiser, 15/11/10, General News, Page 6
By: None

Article Information

Item ID: 00083141633
Circulation: 14,582
Number of words: 312

14/11/2010

▶ **Nation's shame not forgotten**

Sunday Canberra Times, 14/11/10, Sunday Focus, Page 35
By: None

Article Information

Item ID: 00083082838
Circulation: 33,511
Number of words: 966

13/11/2010

▶ **Week's best**

Weekend Australian, 13/11/10, Review, Page 32
By: Kerrie Murphy

Article Information

Item ID: 00082698101
Circulation: 300,941
Number of words: 455

▶ **City orphans' harrowing tales**

Ballarat Courier, 13/11/10, General News, Page 10
By: Brendan Gullifer

Article Information

Item ID: 00083020999
Circulation: 18,860
Number of words: 416

▶ **Ballarat Courier - www.thecourier.com.au
Orphans' harrowing tales to air on SBS**

Ballarat Orphanage was part of a network of institutions where children were victims of sexual abuse and criminal assault, according to a documentary to air on SBS on Tuesday. The Forgotten Australians tells the story of the two cofounders of the Care...

Date Found: 13/11/2010 6:19 AM

Summary ID: 83018408

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Tuesday November 16

tv previews Nick Galvin

How Mad Are You?

SBS One, 7.30pm

👍 The glib title scarcely does this thought-provoking two-parter justice. Here's the set-up: 10 people are brought together for a week at an English country house.

Five of them have been diagnosed as mentally ill with conditions ranging from depression and schizophrenia to obsessive compulsive disorder and anorexia. The other five have no mental illness. They spend the week completing a range of tests and activities designed to highlight the illnesses (cleaning out a cowshed should reveal the OCD sufferer; being forced to do a stand-up spot should flush out the anxious among them).

Observing the goings-on is a panel of three experts whose challenge is to identify who is ill and who isn't.

It's all based on a 1972 experiment when an American scientist set out to prove psychiatrists were unable to distinguish between sanity and insanity, successfully getting himself and a group of friends admitted to a psychiatric hospital. You'll have to watch to see how successful the panel is in identifying the various mental illnesses but suffice to say, the program does raise some disturbing questions about the line between sanity and insanity and how dangerously subjective psychiatric diagnoses can be.

The Forgotten Australians

SBS One, 8.30pm

👍 Between the 1930s and 1980s more than half a million Australian children were brought up in institutions. Generations of youngsters were effectively warehoused in a brutal system based around routine, discipline and an almost total lack of love and affection.

This documentary follows the extraordinary efforts of two women, Leonie Sheedy and Joanna Penglase, to bring the scandal out of the shadows, which ultimately resulted in the public apology from then PM Kevin Rudd in 2009.

The story is told simply through the personal experiences of survivors among the forgotten Australians and is all the more powerful for it. Keep the Kleenex handy.

The Red Riding Trilogy: 1974

SBS One, 10.05pm

👍 Dark doesn't begin to describe this adaptation of the first of David Peace's novels. Set against the backdrop of the Yorkshire Ripper killings (but not dealing expressly with them), this is a claustrophobic, atmospheric narrative in which no one, apart from journalist Eddie Dunford (Andrew Garfield), is untouched by depravity or corruption. It's far from the Yorkshire of *Heartbeat* or James Herriot.

A sadistic child killer is on the loose and Dunford, returning to Yorkshire after a failed spell "down south", begins pulling at the threads around the deaths and is dragged into the heart of the evil. It's tough but utterly compelling.



Dark matters ... Andrew Garfield stars in *The Red Riding Trilogy*.



Bendigo Advertiser
15-Nov-2010
Page: 6
General News
Market: Bendigo VIC
Circulation: 14582
Type: Regional
Size: 147.43 sq.cms
MTWTFS-

Country's ugly side revealed

CLARE QUIRK

ACTIVIST for the “forgotten Australians” Leonie Sheedy wants her country to know its real history.

The horror stories of some of this nation’s most vulnerable children will be laid bare in a documentary airing on SBS tomorrow night.

The Forgotten Australians brings to light the untold shameful history of Australia’s care institutions.

Ms Sheedy was three years old in 1957 when she was put in an orphanage in Geelong.

Her brother spent time in the Bendigo Boys Training Centre where he was made to work and given no education.

He was brutalised and abused while he was there for four years, leaving when he was 19. He went into his first home when he was two.

All in all he spent time in 10 institutions in Victoria.

“I was in at three and out at 16,” she said.

“That’s prison language ‘in and out’. I lost sisters and brothers.

“There are just too many horror stories – elderly people

who didn’t learn to read and write because they were forced to work.

“We were told we were never going to amount to anything.”

Ms Sheedy said Kevin Rudd’s 2009 apology was warmly welcomed.

“The apology was for the loss of our families and the lost opportunities, it was for the brother I found after 40 years and the sisters I haven’t.

“I want the people of Australia to be conversant with our history as they’re with the stolen generation,” she said.

“This country needs to be so proud, we deserve a medal for surviving our childhood.

“There are a lot of people living with a very dark secret in their families.”

Ms Sheedy is a joint founder of Care Leavers Australian Network and fought for 10 years to bring these stories to the attention of the nation and achieve government support for the thousands of care leavers still alive.

The documentary airs tomorrow at 8.30pm on SBS.



Nation's shame not forgotten

IT'S SOMETHING many Australians would rather forget. In the 50 years to 1980, more than 500,000 Australian children grew up without love or affection, often separated from siblings, in institutions and orphanages around Australia.

Few were actually orphans. They were victims of the Depression, family loss and breakdown after the two world wars and the post-war baby boom.

The traditional family model of a male breadwinner and female homemaker was the norm and where this broke down – through illness, unemployment, separation, divorce, or death – sole parents had few means of keeping their children.

In an era with few community or government services, parents had few options but to put the children in a home.

Children suffering from neglect – usually as a result of family poverty or misfortune – were also forcibly removed by state welfare authorities or police.

A smaller group of children who had committed petty crimes were deemed delinquent – especially girls with the status of being exposed to moral danger, who were put under lock and key in special training schools.

Many of the children suffered sexual, physical or psychological abuse and all suffered the emotional trauma of isolation and neglect.

It's estimated there were more than 600 children's homes across Australia in the 20th century, predominantly run by churches and charities but also by state governments.

More than 500,000 children can be counted as Forgotten Australians – a term which also includes child migrants, the Aborigi-

nal Stolen Generation and children institutionalised with disabilities.

By the 1970s, the social and political environment in Australia had changed and the Whitlam government introduced the single parent pension, giving sole parents the financial means to keep their children.

Social reformers pushed to close down large children's homes in favour of cottage homes and foster care and by the early 1980s – when the last homes were closed down – all was forgotten.

There are at present 34,000 children in foster care in Australia.

Although most Australians would have met someone raised in care, few have any understanding of what happened in Australian children's homes or why.

For many, the issue could be dismissed by saying, "They did what they thought was best at the time" and even after the formal apology by then prime minister Kevin Rudd last year some still failed to see its relevance or importance.

But for the joint founders of Care Leavers Australia Network Leonie Sheedy and Joanna Penglase the emotional apology was the culmination of 10 years' hard work and heartache.

On the anniversary of the bipartisan apology, the story of Sheedy and Penglase's battle to have the truth behind Australian orphanages and care institutions recognised will be told for the first time in an SBS documentary. Written and directed by Nicola Woolmington, the film tracks the story of the Forgotten Australians in 2005, 15 months after a 2004 Senate inquiry.

After the 1997 inquiry into the Stolen Generation, Andrew Murray initiated the Senate Community Affairs Inquiry into Child

Migration.

Its report, *Lost Innocents*, examined the fate of 100,000 children who were shipped to Australia from England, Ireland and Malta in the 1940s, '50s and '60s.

Murray was one of the child migrants sent from Britain to Rhodesia under the Fairbridge scheme. During the inquiry Murray's attention was drawn to submissions from a far larger group of people who had spent time in institutional and foster care in Australia.

The Care Leavers Australia Network's submission pointed out the Aboriginal Stolen Generation had their inquiry; the child migrants were now having theirs, but another inquiry was required to complete the trilogy.

It was an argument Murray took on board.

Penglase was one of the driving forces behind the inquiry. Having grown up in care herself, she went on to write her doctoral thesis on children's homes in Australia.

From the age of eight months, Penglase lived in a small fee-paying children's home in Sydney.

While she was writing her PhD, she met Sheedy, who was one of the 90 people she interviewed for her thesis.

Sheedy, who grew up in St Catherine's Girls' Orphanage in Geelong from the age of three until she was 16, acted as a mother figure, providing emotional support to hundreds of former home children and lobbying passionately on their behalf.

The pair were awarded an Order of Australia in 2007 in recognition of their work, but it was another two years of work before the pair received the apology they felt the Forgotten Australians justly



deserved. A year on, the focus is turning towards the church's role and compensation.

The head of the Salvation Army is arriving in Australia from London later this year to make its apology.

Church groups and state governments have also issued apologies and three states – Tasmania, Queensland and Western Australia – have set up limited redress schemes which offer modest reparation payments to Forgotten Australians.

South Australia is likely to follow, with a recent inquiry revealing widespread sexual abuse of its former wards.

In the ACT, a Greens motion for an apology and a national inquiry into the forcible removal of babies from young unmarried women was adopted by the Legislative Assembly.

ACT Greens leader Meredith Hunter says many Forgotten Australians were forcibly removed from young mothers between the 1940s and the 1980s, and she is

lobbying for an apology to the parents of the Forgotten Australians.

"Across Australia a number of hospitals and now the state of Western Australia have apologised for what occurred, there have been parliamentary inquiries, and now many stories have been told of the horrendous wrongs that were perpetrated," she said.

■ **The Forgotten Australians screens on SBS One on Tuesday at 8.30pm.**



SBS's documentary *Forgotten Australians* tells the story of more than 500,000 children who were placed in institutional homes in Australia between 1930 and the 1980s. This picture is a dramatic reconstruction

"Many suffered sexual, physical or psychological abuse"



Care Leavers Australia Network members with founders Joanna Penglase, left, and Leonie Sheedy.



week's best



Kerrie Murphy

A Small Act

Monday, 9.30pm, ABC1
 Hilde Back once sponsored a child in another country, but didn't necessarily think much about the impact it was having. The recipient, Kenyan student Chris Mburu, certainly did. Now a human rights lawyer with the UN, he has started a scholarship in her name to pay the favour forward. With Back a Jewish Swede who fled Germany with her family during the Holocaust and Mburu witnessing ethnic violence in his homeland, this showcases the best and worst of humanity.



How Mad Are You?

Tuesday, 7.30pm, SBS One
 There's a line between having a distinct personality trait and a mental disorder, but where exactly do you draw it? That's the question posed by this social exercise in which 10 people, half of whom have been diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder, complete a series of activities, while three psychologists see if they can identify them.

The Forgotten Australians

Tuesday, 8.30pm, SBS One
 Humanity's capacity for awfulness knows no bounds, but the misfortunes that have been heaped on children are particularly heart-rending. This tells the story of children who, for one reason or another, were in institutions between 1930 and the 80s, where they were often subjected to physical, emotional and sexual abuse or encountered a baffling lack of empathy in a difficult and confusing experience. A year after Kevin Rudd's apology, the survivors talk about their experiences.

Red Riding Trilogy: 1974

Tuesday, 10.05pm, SBS One
 SBS is screening all three telemovie adaptations of David Peace's *Red Riding Quartet* this week; they're all worth staying up late for. Each gripping and bleak film, *1974*, *1980* and *1983*, takes place against a backdrop of murder, but the story is less about finding a killer and more about corruption. Each film has a different director and its own distinct period look (this first one was shot in 16mm).



Raising Hope

Wednesday, 8pm, Ten
 After a fling with a fugitive, directionless 23-year-old Jimmy (Lucas Neff) becomes a father to young baby Hope and determines to raise her well, despite the reluctance of his parents (Martha Plimpton and Garret Dillahunt), who are already struggling with their demented grandmother, played by Cloris Leachman. This is the product of *My Name is Earl* creator Greg Garcia and has a similarly offbeat sense of humour, but more emotional grounding. It's probably not as accessible as *Modern Family*, but the quirky dialogue is instantly charming.

Rake

Thursday, 8.30pm, ABC1
 As if Cleaver's life weren't complicated enough, he wakes to realise that he has shagged his best mate's wife. Infidelity is the theme of the episode as, at work, Cleaver (Richard Roxburgh) is representing a high-profile chef accused of bigamy and is actually trying to mount a defence. This new Australian drama continues to deliver an enjoyable mix of humour and interpersonal drama and it's especially heartening to see the ABC producing quality drama series again.



Institutional abuse City orphans' harrowing tales

By **BRENDAN GULLIFER**

BALLARAT Orphanage was part of a network of institutions where children were victims of sexual abuse and criminal assault, according to a documentary to air on SBS on Tuesday.

The Forgotten Australians tells the story of the two cofounders of the Care Leavers Australian Network (CLAN).

Leonie Sheedy and Joanna Penglase were instrumental in the Rudd government's national apology to *The Forgotten Australians* last year.

The report details the women's 10-year-struggle to tell the real story behind Australia's orphanages and care institutions, their battle to gain justice for the thousands of Australians who were failed by the system and the steps that led to a 2004 Commonwealth Senate Inquiry.

More than 500,000 Australians grew up in care between the 1930s and the 1980s. They are all counted as *Forgotten Australians*, a term that includes children raised in care including child migrants, the stolen generation and children institutionalised with disabilities.



Joanna Penglase

Many of these children suffered physical or psychological abuse and this documentary concludes all of them were emotionally neglected.

Footage of the Ballarat Orphanage reunion in 2006 includes a moving and powerful interview with two former residents.

"I used to get a flogging for wetting the bed," Yvonne says. "One time I got such a flogging... he dragged me out into the quadrangle in front of everyone, dragged me by the hair he did, and he pulled my hair out of my

head, chunks and chunks of it."

Yvonne's sister, Sonia, says children were made to stand naked on a chair, with their arms in the air until they collapsed in exhaustion.

"And then you got the welt across the bare bottom and it was a big cane stick ... called into the superintendent's office, and you had to pull your pants down in front of (him) ... 13, 14-years-of-age, it didn't matter to him. You had no dignity. He just took it from you, the moment you walked into that room."

Ms Penglase said that while corporal punishment of children was accepted at the time, children in orphanages were frequent victims of sexual and criminal assault, with children in religious institutions often suffering the worst.

"The homes that were run by the most extreme versions of religion seem to me to have been amongst the worst," Ms Penglase says. "And parents thought their children were being well looked after, and kindly looked after."

"Nuns don't do that to children. Public servants don't do that to children. Oh yes they do. That's what people don't want to know."

***The Forgotten Australians* – SBS One, Tuesday, 8.30pm.**