



15 September 2009

## **PREMIER TO APOLOGISE TO 'FORGOTTEN AUSTRALIANS'**

Premier Nathan Rees today announced he would make an apology to children who grew up in orphanages, children's homes and foster homes in NSW this weekend.

"September 19th will be a special day for highlighting the stories of many thousands of children who could not grow up with their own families," said Mr Rees.

"The unregulated care system in past decades saw many children mistreated through no fault of their own.

"Some of those stories are unfortunately sad and tragic.

"It is important that an apology is made by the Premier of NSW on behalf of the Government and people of NSW to those men and women who endured hardships that most of us can not imagine.

"The NSW Government has been working with representative groups to acknowledge this part of our history and build on previous efforts made by Ministers for Community Services.

"The personal testimonies of some of the people in care outline childhoods devoid of love and affection and even emotional and physical abuse.

"We have been told how children were neglected and isolated, brothers and sisters separated, contact with family restricted or denied and opportunity disregarded with children pressed into harsh domestic service.

"This has had untold consequences with a legacy that has sometimes been passed down the generations from family to family.

"On Saturday the chance is at hand to acknowledge the lives of what has been coined the 'Forgotten Australians' and help us move forward," said Mr Rees.

Caroline Carroll, Chair of the Alliance of Forgotten Australians, said: "This is a very positive step. Hearing an apology for the harsh treatment that was given to us as children in NSW will be a meaningful and validating experience.

"The NSW Government has included us and heard what our needs are. It is appropriate that the Churches and other past providers are involved and taking their share of responsibility.

"I hope that Forgotten Australians will find some measure of peace in this beautiful corner of the Gardens where we will always be remembered."

More than 400 people are expected to attend a service in the Royal Botanic Gardens and a reception.

The Premier and Minister for Community Services, Linda Burney will join representatives from past providers of institutional care to speak at the service.