

Welcome everybody to the launch to the new NSW service for Care Leavers and Forgotten Australians.

CLAN would like to thank and acknowledge many people who have committed many hours of hard work to making sure an after care service was provided for people who were raised in NSW orphanages, children's Homes, training schools and foster care. In particular we would like to acknowledge the work of CLAN's co-founder, Dr. Joanna Penglase; herself a NSW Home child. Joanna started all of this when she placed an advertisement in over 150 NSW newspapers way back in 1992. The NSW Child Welfare history and its legacy is no longer a hidden subject because of Joanna's groundbreaking work and commitment to Homies' issues.

This is indeed a historic occasion and as President of CLAN I would like to thank Linda Burney - NSW Minister for Community Services and the New South Wales Government for this new service. CLAN extends their best wishes to Relationships Australia and looks forward to working collaboratively for the good of all NSW Care Leavers and Forgotten Australians.

As an ex NSW home boy from Goulburn I am delighted that this support service for Care Leavers/Forgotten Australians is now a reality and that it will be a service that will benefit so many people who are classed as FA's.

For too long though, we have been exactly that; Forgotten Australians, and for too long we all have had to put up with the perceived stigma of being raised in Homes and institutions. For many of us we have kept silent about our childhood and we have suffered in silence and this has affected the life chances of each of us.

Also, for too long governments of all political persuasions have ignored us, forgotten us, and hoped that we would quietly go away, and it is only by the continued pressure by various support groups including CLAN that these services, even though they are decades too late for many are now being commenced.

Whilst this place will undoubtedly do much good there is still much to do in order to accomplish equity for NSW care leavers - governments, churches and charities still need to come to grips with their actions. Unfortunately the NSW government still refuses to initiate a comprehensive redress scheme even though this happens in WA, QLD and Tasmania. NSW still lags behind other states in its dealings with care leavers.

But having said that, this is a day of celebration, and it is fitting that all care leavers/Forgotten Australians have been invited to attend this opening. It is a time to be proud of who we are and of what we have accomplished. On behalf of CLAN I want to thank everyone who has worked tirelessly to get this Wattle Place up and running.

I hope all of you who are here today will enjoy the occasion and that many of you will be able to utilize the facilities and staff at Wattle Place.