

Forgotten Australians & Former Child Migrants

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

As announced in the 2009 National Apology, the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants Oral History Project, managed by the National Library of Australia, is documenting the lifelong impact of institutional and out-of-home care. The project is ensuring that the voices of many who were in care as children will be heard and that their experiences will be remembered.



After the Apology Anniversary function in Canberra in November 2010, participants visited the Library and met project staff

THE PROJECT SO FAR

After time spent planning and establishing the project we have now completed 57 interviews, with 26 available in full online at <http://www.nla.gov.au/digicoll/ListentotheForgottenAustralians.html>.

The longest interview is over 12 hours. The shortest is 36 minutes, in which 98-year-old Vera Fooks describes her life in care in the 1920s.

Interviews have been conducted across Australia mainly with people who were in care and also with some partners, siblings and former employees. The interviews are revealing a large range of childhood experiences and the effects of care on the pathways people have taken during their lives.

We have interviewed several people who were in Dalmar (New South Wales), Bindoon (Western Australia), St Vincent's Home in Nudgee (Queensland) and Ballarat Orphanage (Victoria), as well as several people who were in foster care. People who have been interviewed now live across Australia—from Albany to Alstonville, from Lake Boga to Launceston, and from Sawtell to Subiaco. Some of those who have been interviewed have had a lifelong search for work or have chosen family life, while others have had a range of careers, including in military, police or prison services, and in social work, education, advocacy, trades, religious



Further information

1800 204 290 (freecall from landline) | fafcm@nla.gov.au

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or civic duties. One theme in many interviews has been the important objects people collected from childhood, with one person interviewed being a nationally significant collector of children's books. We have noted that several people live in suburbs that share the same name as institutions, for example Northcote (Melbourne) and Clontarf (Brisbane).

“ **I don't know that I felt forgotten. I felt irrelevant ... To feel forgotten means that you think you were important in the first place and to be irrelevant means that you know exactly where you fit in.** ”
KIM

EXPRESSING INTEREST IN BEING INTERVIEWED

The Library is selecting people to be interviewed so as to document a range of experiences in care at different times and in both country and metropolitan areas. Over 300 people have expressed interest in telling their story, many of whom heard about the project from membership and advocacy organisations. However, there are gaps in the coverage of experiences and we are particularly interested in hearing from people who were in care in Tasmania and in rural and regional Western Australia and Queensland. We would also like to hear from people who were in care anywhere in Australia and who now live in the Northern Territory. To express interest in being interviewed, please contact Renée on 1800 204 290.



*From left:
Project staff
Renée Shuttleworth
and Joanna Sassoon*

CONSULTATION

Project staff have met with over 100 membership and advocacy organisations, support groups, past providers and key individuals in all capital cities, except Darwin. Suggestions and advice from these discussions have provided valuable input into shaping the project and how we present information about the project to people who have been in care. People who attended information sessions have been spreading the word about the project.

We present project reports to regular meetings of the Alliance for Forgotten Australians.

HAVE YOU PUBLISHED ABOUT LIFE IN CARE?

The Library aims to collect a copy of every book and magazine published in Australia. We are particularly looking for self-published autobiographies by Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants, which can be hard to trace. If you have published an autobiography, please contact Renée on 1800 204 290.

“ **I thought about having a mother ... if I had a mother, what would she look like? ... None of us thought it important to have a mother.** ”
PAT