



Evaluation of Open Place 2010-2013 Final Report

December, 2013

Associate Professor Margarita Frederico

Dr Maureen Long



Department of Social Work & Social Policy

Acknowledgements

First we wish to acknowledge all Forgotten Australians who participated in the evaluation. They shared their stories and their time generously, and demonstrated their commitment to building effective services for all Forgotten Australians. Their resilience in the face of everything they have encountered is inspiring.

The management of Open Place Sheree Limbrick, Joanna Bock, and Simon Gardiner provided information, insight and support and we thank them. We also thank Fran O'Toole Deputy Director of Berry Street who has commented on presentations and an interim report and provided overall support for the evaluation. We thank the staff at Open Place who shared their experiences and knowledge with us and we recognise the key role played by the staff in the development of Open Place.

Thanks also to the external providers who gave their time and knowledge to complete the survey and engage in interviews.

We wish to acknowledge Kathy Gilbert and Francine Hanley Research Assistants. Kathy was engaged in the early stages of the evaluation and contributed to the literature review, the initial analysis of surveys and interviews. Francine contributed to the literature review and analysis of the surveys.

Research Team

Associate Professor Margarita Frederico is has a long standing commitment to applied research and utilizing research to inform practice. She has researched ND practices and taught in child and family welfare and human service organizations.

Dr Maureen Long is Head of the Department of Social Work and Social Policy. She has nearly 30 years' experience in the delivery of child and family welfare services in the government and non-government sectors in the areas of family services, out-of-home-care and family counselling.

Executive Summary

This report presents an evaluation of the Berry Street Open Place program which was established in 2010 in Richmond, Victoria. The evaluation covers the first three years of the program 2010-2013. The aim of the evaluation was to examine the program's capacity to meet the identified needs of Forgotten Australians and to explore the experiences of Forgotten Australians in the program.

Open Place was established as part of the Victorian Government's initiative to coordinate and provide direct intervention to meet the needs of people who grew up in care between 1920 and 1989. A particular focus was the need for a program to address childhood trauma and to promote healing. Berry Street in partnership with Relationships Australia and in collaboration with Child and Family Services (Ballarat), Glastonbury Child and Family Services, St Luke's Anglicare with La Trobe University as the evaluation partner was the successful tenderer for the program. There were changes to the partnership during the period under review.

Open Place was established to provide a direct service to support Forgotten Australians and to redress the significant disadvantage Forgotten Australians and their families experienced. The program was developed in consultation with Forgotten Australian Groups. By 2013, there were over 2,000 registered users of Open Place. By mid-2012, the services were categorized as: Records, Find and Connect; Counselling; Coordinated support; and Social Support Groups. The key service components included the provision of: counselling; groupwork; outreach and brokerage; referral, advice, advocacy; life skills, training and support; newsletters; social support groups, social activities, yoga, creative writing, computer skills development, quilting and leather craft; legal information and support; peer leaders; and education for mainstream providers.

Evaluation/action research strategy

The evaluation utilised a mixed methods design to explore the process of the program's implementation, and to determine if the program met the expressed needs of Forgotten Australians. The evaluation design included a literature review. Data collection methods included observations at Open Place, attendance at Forgotten Australian support groups, interviews with Forgotten Australians, interviews with service providers, an on-line survey for Forgotten Australians, an on-line survey for service providers, interviews with key stakeholders, case studies of program participants and focus groups with service users and with staff.

The findings of the evaluation

There was evidence that program operation evolved over the three years and over this time changes were made to services and governance to ensure sustainability of a quality program. The changes were not always uniformly popular with Forgotten Australians and the differing responses reflected the diversity of need and hence different perceptions of desired objectives for Open Place. In 2011, demand for the program increased exponentially with 1000 people accessing the services by mid 2011. The brokerage budget was exceeded in the first three months of 2011-2012. **The brokerage guidelines were significantly amended by the Department of Human Services in 2012 and became a targeted support fund for ageing and vulnerable Forgotten Australians.**

Experiences of Forgotten Australians

Forgotten Australians interpreted their experiences of Open Place as it related to their ongoing life experiences. Perception of experience was influenced by whether the participants attended Open Place in person. There was no significant difference in responses from those who received brokerage and those who did not. Forgotten Australians appeared to assess satisfaction with the service and helpfulness of staff through a framework of their unique experiences in care and their initial expectations of Open Place. Areas commented upon positively by a majority of Forgotten Australians utilising the service, were location of the program, the helpfulness of staff and type of services offered. The majority experienced staff to be helpful in addressing their needs and were satisfied with the services provided.

Experiences of staff

There were changes in management and direct service staff during the evaluation. The evaluation found that the high degree of trauma and strong demands made by Forgotten Australians impacted upon the staff's experience. Staff reported tension and conflict between being able to respond in a timely manner to individuals whilst at the same time being sensitive to the demands of the group as a whole. There was recognition of the importance of staff having time for reflection as the risk of vicarious trauma was perceived to be high. This was exacerbated particularly in the early months by personal attacks made on some staff through social media. Changes made to the program such as greater structure in relation to the use of services provided had a positive impact for staff. The role of management in supporting staff was seen as very important in ensuring quality service.

External providers

The evaluation surveyed external providers of services to Forgotten Australians i.e. the providers to whom Open Place referred clients for health and counselling services. The majority were private providers who offered counselling. The range of referrals received by an external provider ranged between 1 and 12. Moreover the majority of external providers (79.5%) reported that service to Forgotten Australians was less than 5% of their practice. Ninety four percent were satisfied with the referral process with Open Place. Provision of training to develop greater understanding of working with Forgotten Australians to increase the effectiveness of the service provided to the group was highlighted. In addition members of the task environment were positive of their observations of the work being done by Open Place.

Summary

The evaluation highlighted that the majority of all stakeholders perceived the work of Open Place positively. The perception of external providers and key members of the task environment was that Open Place was developing well and had a strong foundation to continue to build an effective program. Forgotten Australians however reported mixed degrees of satisfaction and this appeared to be influenced by their initial expectations of Open Place as well as whether they visited Open Place for services. Forgotten Australians deal with a high degree of trauma and this impacted on willingness to engage in the program. The reaction of Forgotten Australians also impacted on the staff's experience of the program. As the Open Place program is one of the few services for Forgotten Australians to be evaluated, the experience of Open Place has a great deal to offer to understanding effective and sensitive responses to Forgotten Australians.

Recommendations

The recommendations are that:

- Open Place continues to respond to the diverse needs of Forgotten Australians through the ongoing provision of a diverse range of services to Forgotten Australians.
- Open Place further examines its response to services and explores whether there needs to be priority service for the most disadvantaged Forgotten Australians.
- Open Place continues to promote the marketing of the program to ensure that as many Forgotten Australians as possible know about the service and their eligibility.
- Open Place reviews its engagement with the families of Forgotten Australians based on the knowledge obtained of the impact of Forgotten Australians' experience in institutions on their families.

- Open Place again explores the engagement of Forgotten Australians in the governance and management of the program
- Open Place utilises its knowledge and provides ongoing training to external providers and other health and community sector staff in relation to best practice engagement with Forgotten Australians.
- Open Place utilises its place in the service sector to build a network of providers in the health and welfare sectors who service Forgotten Australians to facilitate greater understanding of the needs of Forgotten Australians.
- Open Place utilises knowledge gleaned from the provision of services and partner with Forgotten Australians to advocate to State and Federal Governments for increased and expeditious access to other service systems such as housing and employment to support the most vulnerable Forgotten Australians.
- Open Place continues to provide support for the ongoing provision and expansion of social support groups as they provide social connectedness which is missing in the lives of many Forgotten Australians.
- As one of the few programs for Forgotten Australians to evaluate their service, Open Place ensure that it maintains adequate data collection systems to facilitate continuous evaluation of the service and contribution of knowledge to assist Forgotten Australians.

Limitations

The report also identifies a number of limitations in the evaluation. A plan to measure outcomes for Forgotten Australians utilising a goal attainment measurement was rejected by Forgotten Australians and replaced by solely qualitative measures. The initial plan for the evaluation team to report to a reference group could not be continued when the reference group was disbanded and hence the opportunity for action learning and immediate feedback of findings could not occur. The evaluators continued to meet with management and staff to provide feedback.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| <i>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</i> | 3 |
| <i>LIST OF TABLES</i> | 12 |
| <i>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</i> | 13 |
| 1.1 <i>Background</i> | 13 |
| 1.2 <i>Significance of this issue</i> | 13 |
| 1.3 <i>Setting the context</i> | 14 |
| 1.4 <i>Structure of the report</i> | 15 |
| <i>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW</i> | 16 |
| 2.1 <i>Introduction</i> | 16 |
| 2.2 <i>Who are the Forgotten Australians?</i> | 16 |
| 2.3 <i>Government responses</i> | 16 |
| 2.4 <i>International inquiries</i> | 17 |
| 2.5 <i>Exploring individual need: The varying impact of an institutionalised childhood</i> | 19 |
| 2.6 <i>Service responses to Forgotten Australians</i> | 22 |
| 2.7 <i>International service responses</i> | 26 |
| 2.8 <i>Conceptualising a best practice model for services designed for Forgotten Australians</i> | 27 |
| 2.9 <i>Evaluations</i> | 35 |
| 2.10 <i>Summary of key themes from the literature</i> | 36 |

| | |
|--|----|
| CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY..... | 38 |
| 3.1 Overview | 38 |
| 3.2 Aims of the Evaluation | 38 |
| 3.3 Overview of the Methodology | 38 |
| 3.4 Sampling..... | 39 |
| 3.5 Participants | 40 |
| 3.6 Research reference group | 41 |
| 3.7 Methods of Data Collection | 41 |
| 3.7.1 Stages of data collection..... | 42 |
| 3.7.2 First stage of data collection | 42 |
| 3.7.3 Second wave of data collection | 43 |
| 3.8 Ethics..... | 43 |
| 3.9 Limitations..... | 44 |
| 3.10 Summary..... | 44 |
| CHAPTER 4: PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT..... | 45 |
| 4.1 Introduction..... | 45 |
| 4.2 Establishment of Open Place | 45 |
| 4.2.1 Program objectives..... | 45 |
| 4.2.2 Program principles..... | 46 |
| 4.2.3 Service model components | 46 |
| 4.2.4 Service location: Place –based service | 47 |
| 4.3 Implementation..... | 47 |

| | | |
|--|---|-----------|
| 4.3.1 | <i>Year 1 – 2010</i> | 47 |
| 4.3.2 | <i>Governance structure</i> | 47 |
| 4.3.3 | <i>Operations</i> | 48 |
| 4.4 | <i>Year 2 - 2011</i> | 49 |
| 4.4.1 | <i>Governance</i> | 49 |
| 4.4.2 | <i>Implementation</i> | 50 |
| 4.5 | <i>Year 3 – 2012</i> | 51 |
| 4.5.1 | <i>Staffing changes</i> | 53 |
| 4.6 | <i>Summary</i> | 53 |
| CHAPTER 5: HOW FORGOTTEN AUSTRALIANS EXPERIENCED OPEN PLACE | | 54 |
| 5.1 | <i>Introduction</i> | 54 |
| 5.2 | <i>Method</i> | 54 |
| 5.3 | <i>Factors associated with satisfaction of Open Place</i> | 54 |
| 5.3.1 | <i>Service location</i> | 55 |
| 5.3.2 | <i>Satisfaction with and Helpfulness at Open Place</i> | 56 |
| 5.3.3 | <i>Reasons for perceptions of helpfulness</i> | 58 |
| 5.4 | <i>Association between how Forgotten Australians first heard of the service and their perception of the helpfulness of the service.</i> | 61 |
| 5.5 | <i>Forgotten Australians expectations for Open Place</i> | 62 |
| 5.6 | <i>What ideas do you have for how the service could be improved?</i> | 63 |
| 5.7 | <i>Peer mentors</i> | 64 |
| 5.8 | <i>Case Studies</i> | 65 |
| 5.9 | <i>Summary</i> | 66 |

| | | |
|------------|---|----|
| CHAPTER 6: | THE EXPERIENCE OF OPEN PLACE WORKERS | 68 |
| 6.1 | Introduction..... | 68 |
| 6.2. | Access to Open Place | 68 |
| 6.3 | Services sought..... | 69 |
| 6.4 | Presenting issues..... | 69 |
| 6.5 | Brokerage..... | 71 |
| 6.6 | Development of Knowledge | 71 |
| 6.7 | Summary of worker responses..... | 72 |
| CHAPTER 7: | EXTERNAL PROVIDERS' FEEDBACK -SURVEY FINDINGS..... | 74 |
| 7. | Introduction..... | 74 |
| 7.1 | External service provider surveys..... | 74 |
| 7.2 | Summary of responses to on-line survey | 81 |
| 7.3 | Themes to emerge with members of the Task environment | 81 |
| 7.3 | Summary of themes from the task environment..... | 82 |
| CHAPTER 8: | DISCUSSION | 84 |
| 8.1 | Introduction..... | 84 |
| 8.2 | Discussion of findings..... | 84 |
| 8.3 | Reflections and implications of the findings | 88 |
| 8.4 | Experience of Forgotten Australians..... | 89 |
| 8.5 | Governance | 90 |

8.6 Program 91

8.7 Staff..... 91

8.8 External service providers 92

8.9 Summary..... 92

Chapter 9: Conclusion 94

REFERENCES..... 98

List of Tables

| | |
|---|-----------|
| <i>Table 1: Characterisation of individual need from a population of adult survivors of sexual institutional abuse.....</i> | <i>21</i> |
| <i>Table 2: Services for Forgotten Australians and survivors of historical, institutional abuse (international)...</i> | <i>24</i> |
| <i>Table 3: Access to Records Quality Framework.....</i> | <i>27</i> |
| <i>Table 4 The Open Place Model (2011)</i> | <i>50</i> |
| <i>Table 5: Open Place Model (from mid-2012)</i> | <i>52</i> |
| <i>Table 6: Descriptive statistics of facilities' use</i> | <i>55</i> |
| <i>Table 7. How helpful are the services at Open Place - did not receive financial assistance?</i> | <i>57</i> |
| <i>Table 8. How helpful are the services at Open Place – did receive financial assistance?.....</i> | <i>57</i> |
| <i>Table 9. Mean rank for perceived Helpfulness given by Open Place compared according to whether clients received financial support or not</i> | <i>57</i> |
| <i>Table 10 Reasons for rating 'helpfulness' at Open Place</i> | <i>60</i> |
| <i>Table 11. How helpful are the services at Open Place.....</i> | <i>62</i> |
| <i>Table 12: Issues Forgotten Australians brought to external providers as identified by external providers. ...</i> | <i>80</i> |
| <i>Table 13 Outputs and outcomes</i> | <i>85</i> |

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

The Australian Government in 2003 established a *Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee* to inquire into the experience of the estimated 500,000 Australian children who had been placed in out-of-home-care in the previous century. Two reports were produced as a result of this Inquiry. The first report: *Forgotten Australians – A Report on Australians who experienced institutional or out of home care as children* was tabled on 30 August, 2004 and the second report - *Protecting vulnerable children – A national challenge on the inquiry into children in institutional or out of home care* was tabled on 17 March 2005 (Department of Human Services, (DHS) 2009, p. 1.).

The Victorian Government estimated that 100,000 children and young people were placed in care between 1928 and 2003 of which 59,000 were made wards of the state (DHS, 2009, p. 1). In response to the identified needs of Victorian Forgotten Australians, the State Government decided to establish a program “to co-ordinate and provide direct assistance to address the needs and issues of people who grew up in care” (DHS 2009, p. 1) with the purpose of supporting Forgotten Australians to deal with the trauma and hurt of their childhoods and to enable some healing to occur. The Department sought submissions from organizations to deliver the proposed service and Berry Street in partnership with a consortium including Relationships Australia was the successful tender and established ‘Open Place’ in Richmond in 2010. The objectives of the service as articulated by the Department were to:

“[Deliver] a service for people who grew up in care in Victoria and may have experienced harm and abuse in the period between 1920 and the introduction of the Children, Young Persons’ Act (1989) and their families; Support care leavers and their families to improve their stability and well-being; and Redress the significant disadvantage many care leavers and their families face in their daily lives as a result of growing up in care” (DHS 2009, p. 6).

1.2 Significance of this issue

There were many reasons as to why children and young people were removed from their family of origin including poverty, death of a parent (no formalized child care to call upon), parental incapacity and abuse and neglect. At a time when Governments offered little social security, there was no safety net for families who had fallen on difficult times (Alliance for Forgotten Australians, 2011 p. 2)). What became apparent from the Inquiry was that many of the children and young people placed in care had not as their parents anticipated been provided with care and protection; but instead been exposed to ongoing abuse: physical, sexual and

emotional as well as neglect perpetrated by those mandated to provide care and protection. These experiences occurred in all forms of care and by state, independent and religious-operated institutions. One of the key findings of the Inquiry was that many Forgotten Australians had subsequently experienced long-term disadvantage and were over-represented in mental health, criminal, and homelessness systems:

As a direct result of this experience many 'Forgotten Australians' now face numerous social problems such as welfare dependency, substance abuse, relationship and parenting problems, premature death (often from suicide) and other mental and physical health problems. Many continue to suffer from loss of identity and family, feelings of abandonment, a fear of authority and a lack of trust and security (DHS 2009, p.1).

1.3 Setting the context

It has been suggested in both Australian and international literature that historically state sponsored care provision for children and young people in need was prompted less by concerns for their well-being and more by the need to control. Scott and Swain (2002) assert that Australia's response was motivated by, "Government concern...sparked more by a sense of children as threats to social stability than of children as victims of parental neglect. [This] aroused fears amongst the more respectable classes who urged governments to bring these children under control" (p. 4). This 'residual perspective' sought to ensure that children and youth in need were cared for as "inexpensively and conveniently as possible, enough to satisfy the social conscience but no more" (Lindsey & Doh, 1996, p. 15). There was an ideological belief that neglected children should be 'saved' from the 'bad influence' of their parents "whose poverty was seen as due to their own immorality" (Pelton, 1989, 113).

Many children spent all of their childhoods and adolescence in large orphanages due in part to little action by authorities to support family reunification. As noted by Maas and Engler (1959) American-based studies found many children placed temporarily in care remained in the care system for lengthy periods without clear plans for their long-term care (Lindsey & Doh. 1996, p. 21). These studies found that for many children, out-of-home-care was not a means of caring for parentless children but had instead "been transformed into a holding service provided to living parents who, for a variety of reasons, were unable to care for their children" (Lindsey & Doh 1996, p. 21). There was also at this time growing awareness that children's development and emotional well-being were negatively impacted upon by these institutional experiences -- "children deprived of parental love and affection not only suffered from stunted psychological development but also experienced distorted and harmful developmental consequences" (Lindsey & Doh, 1996, p. 22-23).

Many Forgotten Australians continue to face in their everyday lives the impacts of growing up in institutional care.

1.4 Structure of the report

This first chapter establishes the context for the evaluation report and highlights the issues which Open Place was established to address. Chapter 2 reviews both local and international literature on the experience of children in care between 1930 -1989 drawing on research. The next chapter presents the methodology followed in the evaluation; chapter 4 traces the implementation of the model over the three years of the evaluation, and chapters 5, 6 and 7 present the findings of the evaluation. Chapter 8 presents a discussion of the findings and chapter 9 the conclusion.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

There is little evidence as to what constitutes an effective service model that supports adults who grew up in institutional care. Much has been written about the impacts of early experiences of abuse and neglect and separation from family; but despite both Australian and international inquiries that looked at the experience and impacts of out-of-home-care, there has as yet been little research that documents the many service responses that have been implemented to support this population. This chapter commences by defining the term 'Forgotten Australians', then discusses both Australian and international perspectives on the impact of systemic failures in the delivery of institutional care, and the provision of support to adult survivors of the care system.

2.2 Who are the Forgotten Australians?

The term '*Forgotten Australians*' is a term "the Australian Senate used to describe children who were brought up in orphanages, children's homes, institutions or foster care in Australia...between the period 1920-1970 but can refer to earlier and later periods" (Senate Inquiry, 2004). Other terms used to describe Forgotten Australians include "*care leavers, homies, state wards or ex-residents*" (Alliance of Forgotten Australians, 2011, p. 4). In some instances, children and young people were removed from their families by authorities for protective reasons; in other situations children and young people were relinquished by their parents due to poverty in an era where there were few government supports to keep families together. Though some children were actually orphans, others were "*children of the living*" (Penglase 2005). What has become known about the experience for children and young people growing up in the care system was that many suffered abuse including neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse and emotional abuse whilst in 'care' and were poorly prepared for an independent adult life.

2.3 Government responses

There have been four Australian Senate Reports examining the plight of children who were placed in institutional care in the 20th Century. In 1997, the *Bringing them Home Report* was released which focussed on the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. This was followed in 2001 by the Senate *Lost Innocents Report* which focussed on child migration specifically from Britain. Following this was the 2004 Senate Report *Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced out-of-home care as children* and then in 2009, a fourth Senate Report *Lost Innocents and Forgotten Australians Revisited* was

launched. The 2009 Senate Report reiterated many of the recommendations made in the 2004 Report including that the Commonwealth government make a formal apology to Forgotten Australians. This apology was made on 16th November 2009 by then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd.

The first Senate Inquiry (2004) found that “there has been wide scale unsafe, improper and unlawful care of children, a failure of duty of care, and serious and repeated breaches of statutory obligations” (Executive Summary, p.16). The two quotes below give some indication of the abuse that children experienced and the ongoing impact of these childhood experiences on their adult lives:

“We never felt safe. We came to learn that we were second class citizens. We still feel shame and stigma from our childhoods. We were told we were rubbish, guttersnipes, high grade mental defects, no-hopers, that we’d end up in jail, or as prostitutes. We learnt to expect the worst from people” (Sheedy 2005, p. 66).

“Herded like animals, extremely fearful, no love, fear sickening gut wrenching fear, brutality from inmates as well as staff put in cells for long periods drugged, worked so hard a lonely, loveless wretched childhood. Lives of shame and inferiority complex, acrophobia panic attacks, shame, no schooling, never good enough to this day” (Watson, 2011 p.12).

“Children who have been abused experience more than isolated incidents of violence; rather, they live in a world that breaches their trust and intrudes on their normal developmental process in numerous ways” (Wolfe et al 2001 p.6).

2.4 International inquiries

Inquiries into state-supported institutional care have been conducted in several countries including the United Kingdom, Norway and Canada.

Ireland

In Ireland, The Ryan Report (2009) investigated allegations of child abuse in state and church operated institutions between 1936 to the present though mainly focussing on 1936-1970 when “large scale institutionalisation was the norm” (p. 2). The report found evidence of physical, sexual and emotional abuse as well as neglect in Irish institutions including day and residential schools, reformatories, hospitals as well as other out of home care placements such as foster care. The report heard evidence from 1090 adults who reported experiencing abuse. Witnesses gave evidence reporting that:

“Their adult lives were blighted by childhood memories of fear and abuse. They gave accounts of troubled relationships and loss of contact with their siblings and extended families. Witnesses described parenting difficulties ranging from being over-protective to

being harsh and commented on the intergenerational sequelae of their childhood abuse... [They] also described lives marked by poverty, social isolation, alcoholism, mental illness, sleep disturbance, aggressive behaviour and self-harm. Many witnesses stated that their childhood experiences of abuse and emotional deprivation inhibited their capacity to form stable, secure and nurturing relationships in adult life” (p. 14).

The recommendations of the Ryan Report (2009) are similar to recommendations that have been made in Australia, namely that a memorial should be erected; the lessons of the past should be learned with “the acknowledgement of the fact that the system failed the children, not just that children were abused because occasional individual lapses occurred” (p. 27); counselling and educational services should be made available – including mental health and education to ex-residents and their families and finally that family tracing services should be continued.

Scotland

In Scotland, the ‘Time to be Heard’ model aims to redress the harm arising from institutional abuse by utilising restorative justice strategies. This treatment model offered the opportunity for adult survivors to speak to an independent Chair and Commissioner, and additionally to participate in a restorative justice (RJ) program developed by SACRO; a Scottish organisation which provides services in conflict resolution, restorative justice and reparation (Scottish Government, 2011). The report identified the extent to which the lives of survivors had been devastated by their childhood experiences and provided significant information toward the design and delivery of redress and restoration processes. Notably, the process aided the documentation of the benefits identified by the RJ process and of the importance of regular reviews of service provision and practices in child welfare programs (SACRO, 2012; Scottish Government, 2011).

Canada

The Canadian response to adult survivors of historical institutional abuse has developed from survivor led activities and a redress package known as the Grandview Agreement (the agreement was named after the institution the *Grandview Training School* whose survivors led the campaign) was developed in response. The benefits made available to the survivors as part of a redress package were varied, but included laser services for tattoo removal and scar reduction as many of the survivors were tattooed without their consent and had physical scars as a result of their mistreatment at Grandview which served as visible reminders of their abuse. This element of the redress package has been referred to as a ‘feminist’ adjudication model that acknowledges “understandings about violence against women” and its effect. One criticism of the Grandview Agreement nevertheless has been directed at the absence of Indigenous representation in the report to address the specific needs of Aboriginal claimants (Graycar & Wangmann, 2007).

Norway

The abuse perpetrated on children in Norwegian institutions was uncovered in 2001 when several different accounts were published in newspapers and many former residents subsequently came forward. According to Hanssen (2007-2008), Norwegian children were subjected to physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect in institutions. Accounts of punishments such as force feeding and food deprivation are similar to those reported by Forgotten Australians as was a policy of separating siblings and denying children access to a decent education. The impact of institutional abuse has likewise affected Norwegian adults as it has Forgotten Australians in terms of poor mental health, engaging in substance abuse, relationship and parenting difficulties and an increased reliance on benefits compared to the general population (p.7). Hanssen stated that after 18 months of hearing sad stories what affected her and the inquiry was:

“...the emotional poverty: the reported lack of love and intimacy, the deprivation of never being seen as an individual or a person but always as one of a group, of never receiving positive feedback, and the feeling of worthlessness and loneliness. This was experienced by every one of the children interviewed, even those who had contacted the team to give a positive account of growing up in a children’s home” (p. 6)

Lessons from these reports are reflected in ongoing concern internationally for children currently in care in countries such as Romania, Bulgaria and Italy (www.childout.org). There are also concerns for the plight of children in Asian and African orphanages as well as European countries.

2.5 Exploring individual need: The varying impact of an institutionalised childhood

The Victorian Centre for Excellence in Child Welfare conducted a study “to collect information about the life experiences of Forgotten Australians, the long-term impact of their time in care and their current service and support needs” (Raman & Forbes, 2008, p. 8). The semi-structured questionnaire of 41 men and 35 women identified that placement in institutional care during childhood had enduring ramifications for individuals’ health and wellbeing, educational achievements, personal relationships, potential adult earnings and employment record (Raman & Forbes, 2008). The life outcomes of the sample were lower than those experienced by their peers who had not been placed in care. More than half of the participants had been diagnosed with a disability and earned less than \$200 weekly from wages which were primarily derived from Government support payments. For many participants, there was an expressed anxiety as to how they would be supported in old age with many fearful of ending their lives in institutional care.

In 2006, the Care Leavers’ Australia Network (CLAN) released the findings of a survey to members. This document was titled “A terrible way to grow up: The experience of institutional care and its outcomes for care

leavers in Australia” (Care Leavers Australia Network, 2008). The report documented the impact of historical institutional abuse on the adult lives of Forgotten Australians and identified a range of needs in health care, dental care and ongoing accessibility to mental health support services. The report also identified needs for practical support toward skills and awareness in food preparation, nutrition and healthy eating, and strategies to address weight fluctuations and eating disorders (Ebbels, 2011).

Strategies that support the needs of adult survivors of historical institutional abuse must be informed by service designs with demonstrable benefits for vulnerable populations. For example, Forgotten Australians are not a homogenous group. The needs of adult survivors are likely to differ according to individual factors such as: the history of abuse; its severity; the age at which it began; the duration of the abuse and the degree of family unrest prior to institutionalisation. Other pieces of information might include the degree of cognitive impairment or an assessment of psychosocial need. The literature from Ireland has systematically collated survivor profiles to support the way services designs are developed (Carr, 2009; Carr et al., 2009). Table 1 below presents elements affecting the homogeneity of the adult survivor groups in Ireland. Patterns in the data reflect the type of abuse and the consequences of historical institutional abuse on outcomes in adulthood. The severity of consequences underscores the degree of need in this population, especially the inter-generational effects.

Table 1: Characterisation of individual need from a population of adult survivors of sexual institutional abuse - Irish Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (Carr, et al., 2009).

| | | Historical information | Current information | Wellbeing |
|--|--|---|---|---|
| Group 1 severe sexual abuse | Predominantly male (81.7%) Age 56.93 (Mean) | Time with families before entering an institution (M = 6.86) Reason for institutional entry 10% Illegitimate birth 38.3% Petty crime 38.3% Parents couldn't cope 13% One parent died | Had children who spent some time living separately with the child's other parent who lived separately | Highest rates of PTSD, multiple trauma symptoms, lifetime alcohol & substance use disorders, antisocial personality disorders & multiple life problems Highest scores for marital satisfaction |
| Group 2 severe physical abuse | More males (54.9%) Age 62.43 (Mean) | Time with families before entering an institution (M = 5.65) Reason for institutional entry 17.6% Illegitimate birth 29.4% Petty crime 41.2% Parents couldn't cope 11.8% One parent died | More had put their own children up for adoption | Moderate PTSD symptoms, alcohol & substance use disorders, antisocial personality disorders Fewer life problems than group 1. |
| Group 3 severe emotional abuse | More females (64.7%) Age 59.4 (Mean) | Time with families before entering an institution (M = 4.09) Reason for institutional entry 28.9% Illegitimate birth 6% Petty crime 47% Parents couldn't cope 18.1% One parent died | Higher lifetime experience of panic disorder with agoraphobia | Lowest educational achievement PTSD less common than grps 2 and 3 Fewer life problems than group 2 Lowest rates of alcohol & substance use disorders, or antisocial personality disorder |

2.6 Service responses to Forgotten Australians

The research literature and public documentation of evidence of programs created to address the needs of an older population of Forgotten Australians has also identified a sub-population spanning more than two generations with significant needs. The literature around best practice in respect of providing services to this population is emergent. Service responses for Forgotten Australians have been designed in response to Commonwealth inquiry recommendations. Nationally, the Australian Government funds the *Find and Connect* service to help Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants trace family information and reclaim their identities. Each State in Australia operates Find and Connect services from community spaces or venues designed for Forgotten Australians. In Queensland, the service provider is Lotus Place; in New South Wales -- Wattle Place, Western Australia--Lanterns and Tuart Place, South Australia at Elm Place and in Victoria, Open Place. Services in the A.C.T and Tasmania are provided through Relationships Australia.

The emergence of programs designed to support the complex needs of people who spent time as children in institutional care provides a basis through which to understand the best practices required to implement and deliver appropriate services to older Forgotten Australians. The discussion below summarises recommendations and service models created to provide assistance and support to Forgotten Australians in different state and regional jurisdictions. Guiding the delivery of services to Forgotten Australians are government recommendations which identify the importance of: i.) “appropriate counselling and support services; ii.) financial reparation; and iii) practical solutions for redressing the misinformation or lost information that resulted from forced adoptions” (Sanders, 2012).

Consultative research with Forgotten Australians in Queensland (Porcino, 2011) identified the priorities for future services as assistance in: i.) accessing mainstream entitlements such as health and aged care services, education and employment services, and housing assistance; ii.) locating personal records and reuniting with families; iii.) navigating and accessing compensation through the justice system; iv.) accessing counselling; and v.) the development of peer networks. In Queensland, Lotus Place delivers the service for Forgotten Australians funded by the Queensland Government. Services currently delivered include: i.) an information resource centre and gateway to specialised programs aimed at skill development and peer support; ii.) advocacy and support for Forgotten Australians seeking redress for past abuse (i.e. through the criminal justice system or civil processes) also for access to government and community services or personal records; iii.) Commonwealth-funded ‘Find & Connect’ services; iv.) support for regional peer networks and activities; and v.) support for Forgotten Australians seeking access to specialist counselling or other services

(MICAH Projects Inc., 2012). Lotus Place clients are also encouraged to participate in the ongoing evaluation of all service activities.

In other parts of Australia there are similar programs that target the needs of Forgotten Australians. *Relationships Australia* New South Wales hosts an *Aftercare Resource Centre* at Wattle Place (Parramatta) which provides services to Forgotten Australians. The Wattle Place program includes: i.) counselling; ii.) information and referrals to health, legal and family support services; iii.) drop-in centre facilities; iv.) life skills workshops; v.) social activities and events; vi.) a newsletters; vii.) support for family reunions; viii.) access to records; ix.) help with access to education and training (Relationships Australia, 2012).

In Western Australia, support services are implemented through two agencies: *Lanterns* (Perth) and *Tuart Place* (Fremantle). *Lanterns* is an initiative of Find & Connect and provides: i.) assistance in accessing personal records; ii.) individual counselling; iii.) support groups; iv.) family tracing resources; and v.) social activities (Find & Connect Web Resource Project for the Commonwealth of Australia, 2011). *Tuart Place* is a service founded by Forgotten Australians and is currently governed by both individuals from within the client population and a Board made up of community members. The *Tuart Place* model is a participant-led resource centre for people who have been in out-of-home care. It provides: i.) assistance in accessing personal records; ii.) individual counselling; iii.) support groups; iv.) family tracing resources; v.) social activities; vi.) practical training for computer literacy; and vii.) assistance with external agencies (Forgotten Australians Coming Together Inc., 2013).

Relationships Australia, South Australia hosts *Elm Place* for individuals aged over 18 years old who have a personal history of out-of-home care and provides assistance with: i.) Accessing personal records; ii.) Find & Connect support services; iii.) Family tracing; iv.) access and programs and information around health services, employment and education and other community services; v.) housing and financial management support; vi.) counselling and therapeutic services; vii.) life skills, parenting skills; and viii.) drop-in facilities (*Elm Place* <http://www.rasa.org.au/elm-place/>). Table 2 summarises these services at a glance and provides comparison with other local and international evidence.

Table 2: Services for Forgotten Australians and survivors of historical, institutional abuse (international)

| RECOMMENDATIONS Commonwealth Senate inquiry | RECOMMENDATIONS Forgotten Aust. inquiry QLD | QLD SERVICE MODEL http://www.lotusplace.org.au/#/services/lotus-place | NSW SERVICE MODEL http://www.nsw.relationships.com.au/ourservices/services-library/fass.aspx | WA SERVICE MODEL (www.tuartplace.org/) | SA SERVICE MODEL (http://www.rasa.org.au/elm-place/) |
|--|---|--|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate counselling and support services; • Financial reparation; • Practical solutions to redress misinformation / lost information that resulted from forced adoptions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance accessing mainstream entitlements (i.e. health & aged care, education & employment, and housing assistance • Assistance locating personal records and reuniting with families; • Assistance navigating & accessing compensation • Counselling | <p>Lotus Place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information resource centre and gateway to specialised programs in skill development and peer support • Advocacy and support for redress of past abuse (i.e. through criminal justice system or civil processes) • Access to government & community services or personal records; • Commonwealth-funded <u>'Find and Connect' services</u> • Support to regional peer networks & activities • Support for Forgotten Australians seeking access to specialist counselling or other services | <p>Wattle Place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling • Information & referrals to health, legal and family support services • Drop-in centre facilities • Life skills workshops • Social activities and events • Newsletters • Support for family reunions • Access to records • Help for education & training | <p>Lanterns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance in accessing personal records; • Individual counselling; • Support groups; • Family tracing resources; • Social activities <p>Tuart Place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance in accessing personal records • Individual counselling • Support groups • Family tracing resources • Social activities • Practical training for computer literacy • Assistance with external agencies | <p>Elm Place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessing your records • Find & Connect Support Services • Searching for and possibly reconnecting with family • Access & information to services & programs: health services; employment services; education support • Housing & financial management • Counselling & therapeutic services • Life skills • Parenting skills • Identity & relationships • A friendly, welcoming place to drop in for support |

| Victorian model | ACT SERVICE MODEL | TAS SERVICE MODEL | CARE LEAVER'S ASSOCIATION (U.K.) Access to Records Quality Framework | SurvivorScotland National Strategy (2005) |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| <p>Open Place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling • Groupwork • Outreach and Use of brokerage • Referral, advice advocacy • Life skills, training and support, newsletters – social activities, support groups • Legal information and support • Peer leaders • Education for mainstream providers • Evaluation/action research strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find & Connect • Royal Commission Support Services • Counselling for people affected by Forced Adoption. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access personalized support in searching records • Access to counselling in searching records • Supported document release services • Hub for referral and other networks • Family reconnection where possible | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertise the right for care leavers to access their records in at least one type of media. This could include: advertising through a leaflet or a poster; on the local authority, or voluntary organization, website; in the local press; in the voluntary agency's regular publication or in the council newspaper • Have a statement of recognition that care leavers have a right to this information • Recognise the positive importance of accessing files • Have an access to records policy that is publicly available • Have a monitoring system on requests received and responses made (or to be demonstrably working towards such a system) • Provide a brief and accessible response letter and leaflet to encourage care leavers to see the process through • Monitor the effectiveness of the service through use of an evaluation form | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survivors report that the people who help them do not come from any one professional background or use a particular therapeutic approach. They do not necessarily have high professional status. The majority have not attended specific training courses on child sexual abuse, although they have gathered expertise in other ways. However, they did do the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They were secure and firm about boundaries, but related with warmth and kindness. • They were informed and aware about the main effects of CSA trauma and had examined their own personal issues around working with sexual abuse. • They worked non-hierarchically, consulting respectfully with survivors about what their main needs were and what their service could offer. • They neither hid behind confidentiality nor broke it insensitively. |

2.7 International service responses

Service responses designed to support survivors of historical, institutional abuse in other English speaking countries have developed a diverse range of redress and restitution programs and processes. For example, the Scottish Government developed *A National Strategy for Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse* (2005) (http://www.survivorscotland.org.uk/library/item/_national-strategy-document-1/). The best practices identified for these programs describe a range of practitioner approaches: i.) “there are secure and firm consultative boundaries with clients and relationships are established through warmth and kindness; ii.) service providers are well informed about the main effects of childhood sexual abuse trauma and have examined any professional development needs of their own or personal challenges when working with abuse survivors; iii.) providers work non-hierarchically and consult respectfully with survivors about what their main needs are or what the service can offer; iv.) providers respect client confidentiality” (Scottish Government, 2013). These best practice guidelines point to the role that the quality of the working relationship between the provider and the client plays in the implementation of effective services. The Scottish National Strategy also underlines the essential nature of prioritising access to health and support services for survivors of historical abuse. The implementation of the Scottish National Strategy has a social presence through the “*In Care Survivors’ Service Scotland*” and “*Open Secret*” which provide trauma-informed counselling and advocacy support services for adult survivors of historic in-care abuse and their families. Programs available to survivors by these services include: i.) “locally based support, advocacy and confidential counselling to survivors and their families; ii.) a national confidential telephone Helpline available from 9am to 11am Monday to Friday; iii.) a one stop service for help to access historical records from childhood care settings; iv.) website content with information on support available; v.) help with access to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme and support to pursue legal issues” (Open Secret, 2013).

Additionally, the Care Leavers’ Association (CLA) website based in Scotland (Care Leavers' Association U.K., 2013) provides a quality framework for accessing records and has been specified for application in evaluation, accreditation, management and review. Table 3 presents CLA (UK) recommendations for best practice for access to records and identifies that a process to be followed through to the evaluation of outcomes.

Table 3: Access to Records Quality Framework

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>CARE LEAVERS' ASSOCIATION (U.K.) (2013)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Advertise the right for care leavers to access their records in at least one type of media. This could include: advertising through a leaflet or a poster; on the local authority, or voluntary organization, website; in the local press; in the voluntary agency’s regular publication or in the council newspaper; • Have a statement of recognition that care leavers have a right to this information; • Recognise the positive importance of accessing files; • Have an access to records policy that is publicly available; • Have a monitoring system on requests received and responses made (or to be demonstrably working towards such a system); • Provide a brief and accessible response letter and leaflet to encourage care leavers to see the process through; • Monitor the effectiveness of the service through use of an evaluation form” <p style="text-align: right;">(Care Leavers' Association U.K., 2013).</p> |
|--|--|

2.8 Conceptualising a best practice model for services designed for Forgotten Australians

Service models designed specifically for Forgotten Australians vary according to region and resource allocations. The topic areas described below sketch an outline of the kinds of services deemed to provide appropriate support to adult survivors of historical, institutional abuse. The topic headings have been drawn from local and international literature and include: i.) drop in centres; ii.) help lines; iii.) counselling; iv.) advocacy; v.) referral services; vi.) the supported release of personal records; vii.) websites and computer literacy training; and viii.) the evaluation service responses designed for vulnerable populations like Forgotten Australians.

Drop in centres

Service models implemented for drop in centres reflect both the resources available at the local and/or regional level and the needs of the population of focus. The role of *drop in centres* has been to establish enabling places (Duff, 2011, 2012). The design features identified with enabling places originate from the study of therapeutic and restorative initiatives that have been identified with the promotion of experiences like belonging, the nurture of individual purpose and activities buffering individuals from factors that interfere with general wellbeing (Duff, 2011). Enabling places do not occur by accident, but require material resource allocations, as well as appropriately designed allocations of social and affective resources. For example, while the material resources refer to aspects of the physical setting, the assets and benefits that are made possible

through a drop in centre, the social resources identify the processes, interactions, skills or experience within settings that support trust and social reciprocity. The affective resources refer to the feelings created by a place or setting (i.e. community belonging, restorative mood etc.) (Duff, 2012). Enabling places are designed and developed with all these resources in mind, and include a planning component that is flexible enough to allow the transformation of the service by way of input from the population accessing it (Duff, 2012).

Counselling: Principles of strengths-based practice

A strengths perspective is a philosophical orientation in social work practice originally developed for use in mental health settings that was designed to focus on client's strengths and resources rather than their problems or illness (O'Connor, Wilson, Setterlund, & Hughes, 2008). Strengths-based methods focus on individual agency, capacity and resilience and technically it is identified by six hallmarks (Rapp, Saleebey, & Sullivan, 2006). These include:

- “Goal oriented, collaborative practice” – where clients are invited to set the goals they would like to achieve in their lives, and goal attainment is the central criteria for evaluation;
- “A systematic assessment of clients’ strengths – where the practitioner uses clearly defined protocols for assessing and documenting areas of strength and strategies to address and support those strengths”;
- “The environment is seen as rich in resources” -- resources in the environment are identified and matched to client desires and strengths;
- “Explicit methods are applied to link client goals to their plans and the strategies devised to attain them”;
- “The working relationship between the worker and the client is hope-inducing”
- “The provision of meaningful choices” (p. 81-82).

As a theoretical knowledge base, the strengths-based approach is one of a range of orientations applied in social work practice that can be adopted to guide the processes involved in the engagement of clients with complex needs, the assessment of their needs, the negotiation of desired outcomes, and the implementation of interventions (O'Connor et al., 2008). It is listed here as a best practice approach for populations like Forgotten Australians as its provides a framework and model of practice that is client centred and structured according to the goals enunciated by clients (i.e. through skilled and guided questioning) over time (Trevithick, 2012). Knowledge of trauma and attachment theories is also advocated (Perry 2006).

Counselling: Trauma-informed practice guidelines

Australian practice guidelines for the treatment of complex trauma are newly emergent (Kezelman & Stavropoulos, 2012). The core principles of trauma-informed services and organisations have been summarised by way of the concepts of: i.) safety; ii.) trustworthiness; iii.) choice; iv.) collaboration; and v.) empowerment (Fallot & Harris, 2009). Australian trauma-informed guidelines are extensive. In summary they include the principles identified above as they affect the therapeutic relationship and underline the importance of implementing the most appropriate treatment options suited to the effects of each individual's experience. They highlight also the importance of practitioner experience and training and of the importance that service providers are mindful of the intergenerational effects of traumatic experience on family relationships. They underline also the importance of professional supervision when working with clients who have had traumatic experience. The optimal elements of treatment should include strategies supporting: i.) phased treatment; ii.) the engagement of right-brain and implicit memory; and iii.) client's attentiveness to physical, emotional and cognitive aspects of the treatment experience (Kezelman & Stavropoulos, 2012).

Advocacy

Best practice guidelines for advocacy undertaken with populations like Forgotten Australians are difficult to specify as the context in which individuals or groups of individuals seek enabling or representation by support services will differ according to each situation. Further, the literature describing advocacy in social work is primarily an evidence-informed, practice-based body of knowledge and thereby does not provide generic guidelines generalizable to a range of situations. Rather, understanding the professional skills required for effective advocacy is better understood in the context of the effectiveness of the client-professional relationship (i.e. whether representative or collaborative) (Schneider & Lester, 2001; Wilks, 2012), specifically how central tasks are identified and how the relationship and the identification of tasks combine to create the *activity* of advocacy (Ezell, 2001; O'Hara & Weber, 2011). The effectiveness of advocacy processes and activities will thus be determined by: i.) the style of communication between client and advocates; ii.) the quality of the strategies and plans developed; iii.) the scope of the information gathering activities implemented and the administrative activities employed to support data collection; and iv.) the level of cultural competence of the advocate (O'Hara & Weber, 2011). In considering these four conditions, the literature nevertheless endorses 'a task-oriented approach' to social work advocacy for a range of situations. The common threads found in the literature on task-oriented advocacy identify five stages: i.) a process of problem exploration or definition; ii.) an agreement as to which areas need to be prioritised; iii.) the

formulation of objectives and goals; iv.) undertaking and achieving tasks; and v.) review and ending (Wilks, 2012).

Referral services

Best practice guidelines for referral pathways and referral policy for populations like Forgotten Australians are not easily found in the scholarly literature. Referral is however, a central component of mental health strategies in Australia and elsewhere, and policy documents provide a source of guidance in thinking about what referral activities should look like when designed for people with complex needs like Forgotten Australians. In the United Kingdom, the template for the delivery of rehabilitation services identifies referral as a core component of the service system, and the related policy outlines eight points of reference in which referrals need to be considered as therapeutically appropriate for people with complex mental health needs (Wolfson, Holloway, & Killaspy, 2009)¹. By comparison, Australian national policy is less specific about the circumstances in which referral from frontline activities (i.e. intake or triage) to specific support services are considered appropriate. Rather, the *Roadmap for National Mental Health Reform* identifies the role of referral mainly within a broader health promotion framework where it is linked to early detection and intervention activities (Council of Australian Governments, 2012). Australian national policy on services specific to people with mental health needs in the veteran community identifies 'options' for referral but characterises referral

¹ When to consider making a referral: 1) when a person with major and complex mental health needs cannot be discharged from acute ward but is unlikely to benefit further from an acute ward environment; 2) for assessment of, and engagement with, a person with major and complex mental health problems who has become 'stuck' and non-progressive in their recovery; 3) when there has been an erosion of therapeutic optimism within mainstream services towards a person with complex needs, which may be hindering their recovery; 4) when a person is facing a transition from a highly supported setting to a less supported placement; this includes people leaving forensic or secure services, people leaving out-of-area placements, or leaving residential care to live in the community; 5) when a person needs help in overcoming disabilities associated with severe and complex mental health problems that would benefit from a structured environment and intensive therapeutic programs that are available on a rehabilitation unit; 6) for care, support and treatment in environments which are rehabilitative and may be longer-term; 7) for specific advice on assessment, diagnosis, risk, engagement, treatment, placement, care packages, and other aspects of individual care of people with major and complex mental health needs; 8) more general advice about the needs of people with long-term conditions such as recovery-oriented practice and service evaluation for this client group (Wolfson et al., 2009, p. 15).

as part of individual help-seeking activities, rather than as an activity provided by a support service or professional of some kind (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013).

Australian State-level policies provide a more detailed picture of referral processes across the systems supporting people with complex needs. The South Australian Government identifies referral within a stepped system of care where primary health care and community mental health services provide entry and access points linking individual consumers to a range of other services. The South Australian policy underlines the importance of simple, effective, streamlined and flexible pathways /referral processes that are clear and easy to negotiate individually; underlining specifically the importance of *ease* and *clarity* for people within the criminal justice system (i.e. offenders living in the community) (Mental Health Policy Unit for the Policy and Inter-Governmental Relations Division, 2010). Victorian Government policies for people with complex needs also highlight the importance of referral in linking consumers of primary health and community health services to all kinds of mental health providers in both the private and public areas of the system. It underlines the importance of effective referral pathways within the context of emergency and/ or crisis responses or psychiatric triage. It also makes specific comment on the role that community-based services need to play in diverting people with complex needs away from the criminal justice system. (Department of Human Services, 2009).

The Australian Capital Territory policy identifies referral as a potential key performance indicator in the reform of services in that jurisdiction (i.e. reduction in the proportion of failed referrals between services). In this context, effective referral is linked with better processes of accountability in the coordination of services, the collection of consumer and carer service satisfaction data, and the involvement of consumers and carers in care planning and advocacy (ACT Government, 2004). Finally, a study in New South Wales of the relationship between homelessness and mental health identified interagency communications and coordination between agencies as central features of effective referral and effective pathways for people with complex needs. Barriers affecting a robust system of referral included: i) the lack of permanent supportive housing options; and ii) the lack of a comprehensive framework supporting discharge planning and the integration of services serving populations with complex needs (Costello, Thomson, & Jones, 2013).

Best practices in supported release and access to personal records in social work

Best practices in supported release of personal records to population groups like the Forgotten Australians are as yet undetermined. The process of supported release is an emergent professional practice and is currently described as a set of strategies designed for capturing and describing the records obtained by archivists for

individuals, like Forgotten Australians, seeking access to personal files and biographical material so as to restore or construct their personal identity (Swain & Musgrove, 2012). The central question guiding the practice of supported release concerns the extent to which the individuals accessing personal files are able to appreciate the cultural context in which their personal records were created. For example, documentation from a period forty or fifty years prior may have little detail about the context surrounding a child's institutionalisation. Any interpretation of archival resources toward a coherent construction of the context or rationale will require the support of professional experience and skills; through support release activities (Horrocks & Goddard, 2006). The essential components of supported release programs as they are currently undertaken: i.) clearly identified and articulated pathways from which to begin the process of record access; ii.) a management framework through which to collate fragmented pieces of information from a range of dispersed sources – the emergence in the Australian health care system of the electronic, personal health record may exemplify a way to approach this; iii.) clear description of the purpose for which the record was designed and created (incl. historical context) and of the relationship of that record to each Forgotten Australian; iv.) appropriately designed services to support Forgotten Australians with needs for emotional support or counselling; v.) mentoring to guide Forgotten Australians seeking further information; and vi) services to support the facilitation of contact with family members (Murray & Humphreys, 2012). The development of best practices for this process is yet to be determined and questions guiding the development of practice guidelines for the future should address the information gap between the stark quality of the archival documentation and interpretations needed to support a coherent picture of individual identity for Forgotten Australians across their lifespan.

Website best practices and computer literacy training websites

The literature reviewing the effectiveness, quality and best practices in consumer health informatics provides a model for thinking about best practice principles for community information portals. Central questions about best practices underline the quality of website content and the standards in place that influence best practice. Ethical codes of practice play an important part in determining quality and criteria such as the accuracy and currency of the information, content credibility and completeness. They also influence quality through rules on disclosure, content attribution, authorship, and other caveats (Eysenbach, 2005). Best practices in website construction are nevertheless a shifting idea in the web environment and there are a number of stakeholders influencing this. For example, website developers seek best practice information to improve design. Researchers by contrast seek best practice information on how different individuals access information in order to understand gaps in accessibility. Third-parties like librarians and other professionals

seek best practice information to make websites easy to find, and end-users seek best practices in physical accessibility, search simplicity or information find-ability, content readability (or comprehend-ability), and format usability (Eysenbach, 2005). The evaluation of websites by way of data from the end-user can supply indispensable information. To this end, knowing information about the end-users level of literacy and health status, in addition to observational data about the methods used by individual users when searching information (i.e. the information that is easy vs. difficult to find), contribute significantly to the development of well-designed websites (van den Haak & van Hooijdonk, 2010).

Computer literacy:

Computer literacy is an evolving idea that impacts on service user populations in different ways. The literature identifies the internet as providing the potential for limitless access to information by any individual who is connected. However, physical access to the information gateway does not automatically guarantee that an individual can use it to their own benefit (Park, 2012); an ability essential to literate use of the internet. Access to population specific information in the online environment requires individuals to have a number of operational, formal and strategic skills (van Deursen, 2012; van Deursen & van Dijk, 2011) which are increasingly identified as necessary and thus differentiate the abilities of those using the internet for their own benefit (i.e. 'the computer literate') and those who cannot (Park, 2012). This marks a 'digital divide' when practical knowledge is absent and represents a central barrier affecting social participation in online environments by populations with complex needs (Park, 2012). Hence, social participation in the digital era by Forgotten Australians requires a high level of computer literacy including the ability to control, filter appropriate digital content from a range of different channels; using information for one's own benefit and thus affirming one's digital citizenship (Park, 2012).

Educational approaches that impart skills in the use of digital media and technology have demonstrated positive associations between improvements in computer literacy and improved social participation (Clarke, 2010). Approaches aiming to target social participation need to: i.) target hard to reach populations (Clarke, 2010); ii.) be designed to enable participation by individuals with lower levels of formal education (van Deursen & van Dijk, 2011), perhaps by blending digital literacy into standard adult literacy training (Cullen & Cobb, 2011); and iii.) have been found to be successful when delivered by way of e-mentoring programs (Schreuer & Weiss, 2012); and/or 4) online learning forums (Clarke, 2010).

Family tracing services

Though the literature describing best practices in family tracing services is limited, this will change as Open Place and other 'Find and Connect' services increasingly undertake these activities developing practice expertise which will be documented and contribute to literature in this field.

The literature describing best practices in family tracing services is limited. Nevertheless, one study undertaken by the Australian Institute of Family Studies explored service responses developed for people affected by closed adoption practices in the past (Kenny, Higgins, Soloff, & Sweid, 2012). The study involved a series of i.) quantitative surveys (i.e. online and hard-copy), ii.) in-depth interviews with individuals affected by closed adoption practices; and iii.) focus groups. Other data was collected from informants from representative bodies, service providers and relevant professionals (i.e. psychologists, counsellors and social workers). The findings and recommendations provide a basis for service design in the future. The following summarizes the recommendations made in the AIFS report (Kenny, Higgins, Soloff & Sweid, 2012). Based on the data collected, practices serving family tracing in the context of closed adoption practices need to examine the following:

- i. Improve education and training of professionals who work with people affected by past adoption practices:
 - Counsellors, social workers, and mental health professionals require better professional development and training in adoption-related issues, including external clinical supervision and support
 - Good practice guidelines in counselling (for this population) are needed
 - Dissemination of information, research and conference presentations about populations needs
 - Further research (i.e. longitudinal studies).
- ii. Improve community awareness:
 - Government campaigns required to increase community awareness about past adoption practices and their effects
 - Educate teachers, hospital staff, allied health practitioners, mental health workers, counsellors, social workers, ministers of religion etc.
 - Provide materials to share with clients on adoption-related issues, i.e. fact sheets

- Many participants asserted that television programs such as Find my Family have encouraged an inaccurate perception of adoption issues.
- iii. Improve funding for specialized support services to:
 - People on fixed or low incomes
 - Clients needing counselling and support services over longer periods
 - Online and telephone support services to clients in rural and remote areas.
 - iv. Improve networking/ liaison between organizations, agencies and state/ territories:
 - So that best practice issues are developed, communicated and shared
 - By creating interagency professional networks appropriate information can be disseminated
 - Enhance cooperation between various agencies providing support for people affected by past adoption experiences.
 - v. Facilitate access to information for people affected by closed adoption:
 - Provide support with family search, contact, and mediation
 - Intermediary and mediation services are needed for clients who require assistance during the reunion process in managing contact with birth family.
 - vi. Support with search, contact, and mediation:
 - Ensuring consistent access policies from Births, Deaths and Marriages departments across all states
 - Create digital records in each state and searchable databases
 - Simplify the process of accessing information
 - Waive fees for accessing records
 - Review privacy laws in the context of adoption e.g. encouraging face-to-face interactions with clients when providing adoption information, allowing counsellors who have established a relationship with client to pass on sensitive information.
 - Employ more caseworkers, researchers, and administration support.

(Kenny, Higgins, Soloff & Sweid, 2012, p. 188-9)

2.9 Evaluations

The literature evaluating support services and community programs targeting the needs of adult survivors of institutional care is limited. There is a range of literature that does reflect interventions with vulnerable populations that assess for example, programs designed to support the social participation needs of adults

and older people with mental illnesses, chronic health conditions, the homeless, the socially or geographically isolated, and people affected by grief or trauma (see (Cohen et al., 2006; Routasalo, Tilvis, Kautiainen, & Pitkala, 2009). These programs have shown that the positive outcomes of participation improve individual health and wellbeing, and are believed to reduce the risk factors associated with an earlier transition to residential aged-care (Cohen et al., 2006; Routasalo et al., 2009). The social engagement offered through community programs has been linked also with improvements in individual social functioning, mood and morale (Cohen et al., 2006), and the independent variables are believed to be associated with the relief of loneliness and having fresh opportunities to start new friendships (Fisher & Li, 2004; Jones, Herrick, & York, 2004).

The research designs used to determine relationships described above range from individual designs, to group studies and service evaluations, and each design has applied methods at different levels of the phenomenon studied. For example, questions about individual wellbeing have applied both qualitative methods (Jones et al., 2004) and multilevel designs using measures like the Short Form–12 Mental and Physical summary scores (Ware, Kosinski, & Keller, 1995) and life satisfaction scales (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). Quasi-experimental designs have combined the use of self-report measures (i.e. for baseline data) with other more widely applied scales for loneliness, morale and depression (Cohen et al., 2006). One randomised controlled trial studied data at different time intervals for depression, mental cognition, loneliness and wellbeing.

Studies seeking information about service outcomes have used mixed-methods designs (i.e. structured or in-depth interviews combined with questionnaires, surveys or observations) and gathered data from informants at different levels of the system (e.g. the client group, the services staff, managers, professional providers and other stakeholders) (Kenny et al., 2012). Designing evaluation research thus requires a clear understanding of how the findings/ outcomes may be used, who will or should benefit most from those findings, and thus how best to identify the priorities or key questions needed to ensure that the data collected data reflect the questions of highest priority.

2.10 Summary of key themes from the literature

The literature review has commented on the impact of systemic neglect and abuse of children in institutional care, and of processes to understand the impact of such experience. The long term impacts of historical, institutional abuse and the social and political systems aimed to redress these impacts have been identified. Less well-understood is how different service models have succeeded. Early indicators of effective support to

vulnerable populations like the Forgotten Australians have come from a range of local and international contexts.

Strategies that have been applied to support the design of effective support services have included the study of the population's characteristics according to need, inquiries that support the retelling of personal experiences by survivors for documentation on the public record, and social responses that address the very varied and often highly specific needs of individuals from this vulnerable population.

Service models designed to provide ongoing and appropriate support to vulnerable populations like the Forgotten Australians have been described in the literature and a range of services components have been implemented to address the diversity of need. Programs are implemented in different ways according to the context and the design and sustainability of programs vary greatly also. Core services found to be of relevance to this population are: drop-in centres; social activities; counselling; advocacy; referral services; website access and computer literacy training; supported release of personal information and family tracing services; and evaluation activities.

The implementation of core services relies on appropriate design considerations at a number of levels to ensure sustainable and effective services. Sustainable and effective programs appear to draw upon the collation of data and the integration of evidence from the very local to the broader international context. For example, sustainable services are informed by research on the population characteristics, including the knowledge that can be gleaned from an understanding of the life experience of individual adult survivors, the heterogeneity of the population need, as well as data on intervention effectiveness. Sustainable and effective service designs also take lessons from service systems designed for equally vulnerable populations with similar kinds of needs, they have in-built quality assurance processes that collect service user data and may also draw upon the best practice literature, proven theory or other evidence-informed knowledge. Effective programs underline the importance of staff expertise, and relevant and up-to-date training. They also aim to ensure that services are properly advertised, targeted and accessible and linked to service networks across the spectrum of identified need to referrals systems supporting appropriate psychosocial activities; a widely publicised calendar of events can fulfill a number of these. Finally effective and sustainable services ensure that the uptake of future best practice information is possible by way of agency collaboration, ongoing evaluation and systems for ongoing professional development of staff.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Overview

The evaluation was designed to explore the experience of Forgotten Australians who engaged with or knew of Open Place from its implementation in 2010 and over a three-year time period. The goals included identifying the experiences of Open Place staff and external service providers who work with the program. An action research design was developed prior to the commencement of the program and was initially utilised to inform the program implementation. However as described in more detail in chapter 4, external influences led to some early changes in the governance structure of Open Place and service delivery in the first year of the program. This impacted upon the evaluation design. The central intent of the evaluation remained to understand the experience of Forgotten Australians and the meaning they place upon their engagement with Open Place and its services. To address this a mixed methods methodology was chosen with a particular focus on hearing the stories of the Forgotten Australians.

3.2 Aims of the Evaluation

The key aims of the evaluation are to:

- Evaluate the program's capacity to meet the identified needs of Forgotten Australians
- Engage in the development of an effective service for Forgotten Australians that meets their needs
- Develop greater knowledge of the impact of institutional care on Forgotten Australians
- Identify appropriate interventions to assist Forgotten Australians.

3.3 Overview of the Methodology

The research design was initially described as a continuous process and outcome evaluation conducted over the first three years of Open Place's operation. An action research element has remained an important part of the design however the initial feedback arrangements, which were to be through the reference group were not sustained to the same frequency when the reference group was disbanded. However, the evaluators were able to meet with staff as a group three times over the time of the evaluation to provide feedback on the program. There were two evaluation components implemented

- Literature review, and

- Mixed data collection methods: Interviews with service users, interviews with service providers, on-line survey for service users, on-line survey for service providers, interviews with key stakeholders, four-five case studies and focus groups with service users.

A third component was to be the Implementation of a client outcome measure with the development of a modified goal attainment scale (GAS). The plan was that Forgotten Australians would be asked to set their goals on entry to Open Pace and to indicate how they would determine if the goal was achieved. The GAS however, was not conducted. When GAS was presented to the Reference Group, concern was expressed that this could imply a judging of Forgotten Australians and the Reference Group recommended that GAS not be used.

The evaluation research strategy was also developed to add to knowledge of the experience of Forgotten Australians through analysis of themes arising from the data in the evaluation and determine further research questions and *develop a research strategy* to explore these which could be built into the program. Rossi et. al. (2004) discuss different stages of program evaluation and the impact of the stages on the evaluation approach. They point out that assessment of programs in the early stages of implementation and planning will be different from assessment of well-established programs (p 39). They also suggest that the unsettled nature of programs in their beginning years often makes evaluation of impact premature (p. 39). However, the value of an evaluation at this stage is that it can identify early on the experience of those whose needs it has been established to address.

For the Open Place evaluation, the evaluators were informed by research and evaluation approaches. The overall approach is still the cyclical action research approach (design, act, observe reflect) as the evaluators conducted data collection at different stages of the program design and provided feedback. The approach was also informed by a phenomenological tradition of qualitative inquiry (Creswell 2007) which supports the seeking of meaning of experiences.

3.4 Sampling

Forgotten Australians

Participation in the evaluation was voluntary and open to all service users including Forgotten Australians who did not attend the centre itself. Opportunity to participate in interviews was advertised on the Open Place Website, in flyers at Open Place and in the Open Place quarterly newsletter. It initially proved difficult to recruit the planned number of service users to interview. The researchers also attended Open Place on

occasions when activities were planned that brought people to the organization. Given the vulnerability of this population, it was not unexpected that it would be difficult to gain the participation of service users. Renzetti and Lee (1993) (as identified by Liamputtong and Ezzy 2006, p. 212) argue *“that accessing potential participants becomes more difficult when the research issues are more sensitive or threatening since these people have a greater need to hide their identities and involvement”*.

Staff

All staff were offered the opportunity to participate in a group and/or individual interview.. In total, 18 staff participated. Staff were invited to meet with the evaluators via emails from the Open Place Manager, the receptionist at Open Place and emails from the evaluators informing that they would be at Open Place on a certain day and would they be interested in being interviewed. The staff could choose whether to participate.

External Providers

External providers were those who provided services to Forgotten Australians referred by Open Place or who were already engaged with Forgotten Australians, for example in regards to accessing records and establishing eligibility for Open Place. The external providers were recruited via a list provided by Open Place.

Other members of the Task Environment

Key informants from Community Service Organizations and self-help organisations were recruited through discussion with Open Place and the evaluators’ scanning of the task environment. Six individuals were selected for interview. These individuals represented Government, CSOs and self-help groups.

3.5 Participants ²

There are three groups of participants in the evaluation.

Forgotten Australians

The first group is Forgotten Australians. Open Place was established to “provide support and advocacy to all Victorian care leavers and their immediate family, regardless of where they currently reside” (DHS 2009, p. 7). This includes all people who were placed in ‘out-of-home-care’ as children-- in children’s’ homes, orphanages and foster care (care leavers). The target group for these services were individuals who had been placed in care between 1920 and 1989 (the year that the Children, Youth and Young Persons’ Act was introduced which implemented significant changes to how services in child welfare were delivered (DH 2009, p. 6). Within the

² The term ‘participant’ is used to identify those who agreed to participate in the evaluation

group of Forgotten Australians there are sub-groups of people related to their experience for example Child Migrants. Forgotten Australians who were mentors or members of support groups were also included in this group of participants.

Open Place Staff

The second group of participants are those who deliver services to Forgotten Australians directly associated with Open Place. This includes those who comprised the initial reference group that was developed to oversee the evaluation and the staff of Open Place. Semi- structured individual interviews were conducted with the Open Place staff. The Reference group was disbanded.

External Providers

The third group was the external providers who provided individual services to Forgotten Australians referred to them by Open Place and others. The major data collected in this area was through an electronic survey. However, interviews were also held with key providers. The external providers were asked to respond to an on-line survey administered through survey monkey.

3.6 Research reference group

The research reference group comprised all key consortium partners including the evaluators. The reference group met on four occasions and the evaluators presented the evaluation plan and then updates and interim findings. Although there was almost full membership attendance at the first two meetings; attendance was poor at the final two meetings and the group was disbanded. This was due to a number of issues including staff changes in relevant organizations and a change in the Governance of Open Place. The last meeting took place on October 20, 2011.

In late 2011, the inaugural Manager of Open Place who had overseen the development and implementation of Open Place announced that she would be leaving. An interim Manager was appointed and the new Manager commenced in March 2012. It was considered that a change in the manager may impact on Forgotten Australians familiar with people leaving them though this was not commented upon.

3.7 Methods of Data Collection

Although it was originally intended that the data would be collected in one continuous wave and feedback provided to Open Place at six month intervals, this did not eventuate. After the program commenced in year one, it faced some challenges from some Forgotten Australians who were angry at the program structure. Changes within Open Place also resulted in the evaluators discontinuing data collection from staff for a period

of time. In addition, in 2012, major changes to service delivery in relation to brokerage changed the approach to the delivery of the service. In response to these changes, the data was organised in two waves. The first wave was from the commencement of the project -- February 2010-June 2012. The second wave July 2012 – June 30, 2013.

3.7.1 Stages of data collection

The data collection methods included:

- Data on the commencement of the project obtained through engagement with the reference group and interviews with staff involvement in the establishment of Open Place
- Interviews with all staff
- Interviews with Forgotten Australians
- Group meetings with service users at support groups
- Attendance at support groups and observations
- Survey of service users
- Survey of service providers
- Case studies

³3.7.2 First stage of data collection

Six interviews had been conducted with service users by June, 2012. Four of the respondents were women and two men. All participants had spent time in institutional care for varying lengths of time. One participant was adopted and another had been placed in foster care. Though the focus of the research was upon consumers' experience of the service provided to them by Open Place, service users needed to first set the context of their experience with the interviewer so that their story and experience could be understood. The interviews varied in time from 60 minutes to one that occurred over two sessions lasting in total close to 2.5 hours.

February, 2010 -- June, 2012. * Occurred post January 24, 2011 after ethics' approval

- Interviews with Open Place staff *
- Engagement with and feedback from the reference group

³ The term participant in the analysis of surveys is used to refer to those who completed the surveys.

- Interviews with Open Place service users *
- Ongoing literature review
- Attendance at a regional and metropolitan social support group *
- Focus group with peer mentors *
- On-line service provider survey. *

3.7.3 Second wave of data collection

In the second phase of the data collection (July, 2012 – June 30, 2013), a further six interviews (which included a group interview of four women) were conducted and two individual interviews with two male service users. This was in addition to feedback provided to the evaluators through attendance via Open Place and support groups. Approximately an additional 18 Forgotten Australians provided feedback through these groups. In addition a small number of Forgotten Australians contacted the evaluators by phone.

The second stage of the data collection: July, 2012 to June, 2013

- Interviews with Open Place staff
- Interviews with Open Place service users
- Ongoing literature review
- Ongoing on-line service provider survey
- On-line service user survey
- Interviews with key informants
- Ongoing literature review
- Ongoing on-line service provider survey
- Interviews with Open Place staff
- Attendance at metropolitan social support groups

3.8 Ethics

Ethics approval (No. 10-096) for the project was obtained from La Trobe University Human Ethics Committee on January 24, 2011. Separate service user and service provider Participant Information & Consent Forms (PICF) were developed which outlined the research, what it entailed for participants, their right to withdraw at any time as well as how the collected data would be de-identified.

3.9 Limitations

The change in the governance structure of Open Place impacted on the Action Research design with the demise of the reference group contributing to the direction and implementation of the evaluation approach. The rejection of the 'goal attainment scaling' or any measure of Forgotten Australians goal attainment restricted the data on outcomes for Forgotten Australians to the experiences described by the Forgotten Australians. Another limitation was the suspicion of that evaluation held for some Forgotten Australians impacting on recruitment for the evaluation.

3.10 Summary

Evaluating a new program is challenging in that the early stages of implantation are often full of changes and it can take over a year for a program to establish its ongoing model of operation. As can be seen in the development of the methodology it was important in this evaluation that the evaluation design and data collection methods were flexible whilst maintaining the core focus on the experiences of Forgotten Australians in utilising Open Place.

The following chapters present the findings of the evaluation. Chapter 4 presents a chronological picture of the implementation of Open Place. Chapter 5 presents the detailed findings of the experiences of Forgotten Australians involved in Open Place, chapter 6 the detailed findings of Open Place staff, chapter 7, the experience of external providers and the final chapters the discussion and conclusion.

Chapter 4: Program development

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 introduces the findings' section of the evaluation. The findings have been organised into a description of the development of the program. This is followed by chapters which analyse the data collected from key stake holders.

In this chapter a brief overview of the implementation of the program model and the service developments that have occurred since its inception as identified by the evaluators from feedback from staff and participants is presented. The overview does not intend to provide a detailed description of the development of the model. The purpose of the overview is to provide background to the program under review.

4.2 Establishment of Open Place

The Victorian Government tender proposal for the development of a service for Forgotten Australians outlined the following objectives:

- “[Deliver] a service for people who grew up in care in Victoria and may have experienced harm and abuse in the period between 1920 and the introduction of the Children, Young Persons’ Act (1989) and their families;
- Support care leavers and their families to improve their stability and well-being; and
- Redress the significant disadvantage many care leavers and their families face in their daily lives as a result of growing up in care” (DHS 2009, p. 6).

Prior to submitting the tender, Berry Street and Relationships Australia, Victoria (RAV) undertook consultations with Forgotten Australians. The consultations informed the design of the service including the significance of having a separate geographical space and of ensuring continuity with ongoing Care leavers groups (Berry Street-RAV Tender Submission 2009 p 5). The consultations also informed the objectives of the program and the principles identified to guide the program.

4.2.1 Program objectives

Open Place commenced operation with three core objectives to:

- “Provide a service for people who grew up in care in Victoria and may have experienced harm and abuse in the period between 1920 and the introduction of the Children and Young Persons’ Act (1989) and their families;
- Support care leavers and their families to improve their stability and well-being; and
- Redress the significant disadvantage many care leavers and their families face in their daily lives as a result of growing up in care” (Open Place).

4.2.2 Program principles

The model developed by *Open Place* was underpinned by the service principles of:

- Courage
- Respect
- Flexibility
- Accountability
- Collaboration
- Inclusion
- Cultural sensitivity
- Working together and being inclusive

(Logic model for support service for Forgotten Australians - Open Place 2009)

The initial design of the program was built in recognition that the program design would be an evolving one guided by the principles of the program and responsive to the needs of Forgotten Australians. This included avoidance of further stigma or disempowerment, valuing the uniqueness of the individual, flexibility to respond to each individual building trust, encouraging participation, enabling the building of identity and avoiding symbols which could remind individuals of abusive experiences in care (Berry Street Submission 2009).

4.2.3 Service model components

The model recruited a multi-disciplinary team with complementary skills and also recruited people with the lived experience of being a Forgotten Australian. The key service components included the provision of:

- Counselling
- Groupwork
- Outreach and Use of brokerage

- Referral, advice
- advocacy
- Life skills, training and support, newsletters – social activities, support groups
- Legal information and support
- Peer leaders.
- Education for mainstream providers
- Evaluation/action research strategy
- Record searching
- Open Place as a drop-in centre.

4.2.4 Service location: Place –based service

The service commenced on January 16, 2010 aiming to create a “welcoming, relaxed, inner-city place” for Forgotten Australians in Bromham Place, Richmond. The central location was chosen due to its access to public transport and proximity to the auspice agency, Berry Street. The two-story building has a large entry foyer and on the ground floor a ‘living room’ with couches and tables and chairs; a large meeting room; a computer area; a large, well-equipped kitchen; and small interview rooms. The second floor is staff offices. The physical layout of the building was planned to support the different types of services to be provided. The place of the kitchen and the open living room were designed side by side private interviewing rooms and space for educational and craft activities (Berry Street submission). Open Place hours were 9-5 week days with potential for afterhours and weekend openings. Accessibility was increased with a 1300 phone service and a dedicated website.

4.3 Implementation

4.3.1 Year 1 – 2010

To ensure that services remain responsive to the needs of service users, changes need to be implemented over time. This section tracks the service model’s development over the three years of the evaluation.

4.3.2 Governance structure

The initial governance structure reflected the relationship between the consortia members with Berry Street and RAV assuming *contract management*, and the establishment of a *reference group* comprising three care leavers; representatives from Berry Street, Relationships Australia, the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, the Centre for Excellence in Child Welfare, La Trobe University and the Department of Human Services. In

addition, a *Partners' Group* was established which included the Victorian Department of Human Services, St. Luke's Family Service, Mackillop Family Services, Good Shepherd Youth and Family Services, Kildonan, Bethany and Glastonbury.

To guide decision-making regarding the distribution of brokerage funds a *Brokerage, Monitoring & Review Panel* was established to oversee the distribution of the funds and review applications submitted by Forgotten Australians in respect of individual funding applications. The applications included requests for computers, housing support, as well as travel for family reunions. The panel was chaired by the Director of Services for Berry Street and membership included MacKillop Family Services, Relationships Australia Victoria and Berry Street.

4.3.3 Operations

Open Place was opened with much anticipation. Many Forgotten Australians had advocated for years to the Victorian Government to establish a specific service for them that addressed their particular needs. It was formally opened by the then Minister for Human Services, the Hon. Lisa Neville on 18th March, 2010. Opening hours were: Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm. Within a very short time, the demands for service proved overwhelming. Many Forgotten Australians had anticipated that the Federal Government apology would result in them being designated a 'special group' and that this would mean they would be provided with special supports and entitlements. The demand for services, in particular brokerage well exceeded expectations. There was also resentment that a brokerage decision-making committee had been established and this was interpreted by some Forgotten Australians as further evidence that that they were once again being denied what was there entitlement.

The plan for an evaluation of the service was presented at an early reference group meeting. At this meeting, Forgotten Australian representatives were particularly concerned about the evaluation and research being part of the service. The plan to implement goal attainment scaling as part of the research methodology was discussed and rejected by the group as being too intrusive. (Reference group meeting 2010)

By mid-May, 2010, Open Place had delivered services to more than 250 Forgotten Australians including counselling, medical and life skills, support and assistance accessing family records. Open Place staff had embarked upon eight consultations throughout regional Victoria and metropolitan Melbourne. There were 722 names on the Open Place mailing list expanding to 765 by the end of the financial year. Open Place also delivered regular social activities including the weekly Friday 'cook-up' and increasing numbers of Forgotten Australians dropping into the service.

By the end of the first year of operation, six support groups were operating with an additional three groups planned to commence in early 2011.

Open Place staff were reporting that they were becoming “busier and busier; that some days “there were up to 60 calls” with the “highest percentage of calls [being] for brokerage-medical, dental, glasses and life skills, for example computing, gym memberships. There was also a “huge demand for counselling” yet “few [external] counsellors understand” the particular needs and experience of Forgotten Australians (interviews with staff 2009).

Although as indicated above Open Place was able to achieve many of its aims in the first year, the service also faced major issues. Some Forgotten Australians resented Open Place staff and using the social media tool Facebook established a page wherein vitriolic comments were uploaded some of which were very personal and intimidating. It was very distressing for the staff targeted on this Facebook page. The service had to navigate important and sensitive issues, recognizing the level of hurt and trauma that many Forgotten Australians had experienced which would make it difficult for some to engage with the service.

4.4 Year 2 - 2011

4.4.1 Governance

Entering its second year, Open Place made changes to its governance structure to better reflect the realities of how the service functioned and the most effective management structure. This meant re-evaluating the structural arrangements with RAV which assumed a position within the partners’ group. RAV was a key provider of counseling services through the use of brokerage funds but was no longer part of *management*. The reference group also ceased operating.

Open Place began with a commitment to Forgotten Australians being consulted about how the service evolved and represented on reference groups. The reference group comprised Forgotten Australians but it was not considered sufficiently representative by other Forgotten Australians who were not part of the group. After four meetings, this reference group was disbanded. What became apparent was that Forgotten Australians did not want others speaking for them as they are not a homogeneous group being as diverse as the general Australian population.

In respect of determining brokerage applications, it was decided that it was appropriate for the Open Place Senior Manager to determine brokerage applications and referral to the *Brokerage Review and Monitoring Panel* should only occur if there was a dispute.

As the funding body, the Department of Human Services maintained a liaison role to monitor the service performance according to the funding contract. The DHS Liaison representative represented the Department on the Partners' Group.

4.4.2 Implementation

Demand for Open Place services continued to grow with applications for medical needs increasing by nearly 300% and life skills by 900% during 2011. Open Place also increased the activities it delivered from Bromham Place including yoga, groupwork, creative writing, computer skills development, quilting and leather craft. Friday cook-ups continued and the number of social support groups continued to grow. A Peer Leader Coordinator was also appointed who recruited and trained six peer support leader who it was planned would work within the Community Education Program.

By mid-2011, over 1000 Forgotten Australians were accessing counselling, medical needs and life skills. The service was averaging five new brokerage applications daily which resulted in the lifeskills and medical/health brokerage budget being exceeded within the first three months of the 2011-2012 financial year. A review of brokerage was instigated to consider the long term sustainability of the program.

The counselling team extended its program and commenced at the Fulham Correctional Centre offering some individual counseling and support. Table 4 presents a description of the initial services offered by Open Place.

Table 4 The Open Place Model (2011)

| Service | Brief description |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Duty | The duty service provides a first point of contact response to any service user request, including for first time service users and provides an introduction to other <i>Open Place</i> services |
| Reception & Drop In | The Richmond building provides a " <i>place based</i> " service environment and service users are encouraged to utilise the service on a drop in basis, to use computers, meet with friends or workers and participate in a class or activity. |
| Support Team | The support team works in alliance with individual service users and provides direct assistance, outreach support and advocacy in response to identified needs. |
| Records & Reunions | Open Place provides support for individuals wishing to access records of their time in care. |
| Counselling | A counselling service is provided by Open Place staff and contracted |

| | |
|---|---|
| | counsellors across Victoria and interstate who have experience and competency in working with trauma, are familiar with the issues facing Forgotten Australians and work in a strengths based orientation. |
| Wellbeing Groups | The Open Place counsellors facilitate psycho-educational groups targeted towards improved wellbeing. The themes of the groups are representative of common concerns of service users. |
| Peer Leaders & Community Education | Service users participate in a community education program with multiple service providers |
| Social Support Groups | Social Support groups provide an avenue for Forgotten Australians to meet in a social context on a regular basis with other like-minded people. Groups run in a number of metropolitan and regional locations and provide a forum for Life Skills activities. |
| Life Skills Activities | A number of activities operate from the Richmond offices of Open place as well as from the Social and Support Groups with the aim of providing an avenue for the development of specific life skills and/or the pursuit of social and leisure interests. |
| Reunion Travel Brokerage | Resources support Forgotten Australians with the travel costs associated with reunion with family members separated in childhood as a direct consequence of being placed in out of home care. |
| Special Consideration | A limited amount of Brokerage is available to support Forgotten Australians and their family members to cover unanticipated costs and unusual demands such as funeral expenses. |
| Consultations | Service user consultations occur regularly throughout the year across metropolitan and regional Victoria. Issue based forums are also run from time to time. |
| System Advocacy | Open Place participates in a wide range of advocacy activities with relevant peak bodies, other service providers and Government. |

4.5 Year 3 – 2012

In the light of the 2011-2012 experience when the brokerage components of “life skills” and “medical/health” were expended by the end of September 2011, the Department of Human Services undertook a review of the purpose and funding arrangements for medical and other health services offered by Open Place. This review, with input from Forgotten Australians and Open Place, concluded that brokerage, now to be known as the support fund, was to be integrated into the then three service components of Open Place: records, counselling and coordinated support. The “life skills” component was to be discontinued.

Support funding would enable Forgotten Australians to be helped with access to personal records (e.g. birth certificates) and a family reunion (in certain circumstances), access to counselling sessions and assistance with medical and health costs. The coordinated support program prioritized the medical, health and support needs of aging and vulnerable Forgotten Australians. In practice this would mean that some Forgotten Australians,

because of their circumstances, may receive a greater contribution to their medical, health and support needs than others.

The message that accompanied the changes from “brokerage” to “support” has been that Open Place will do what it can to assist; and provide access and support to services needed by Forgotten Australians. This will be done on a case by case basis. Each presenting circumstance is unique and each set of circumstances is assisted within the guidelines that were developed and disseminated in late 2012 and early 2013 (three newsletters contained these guidelines). This message has, in the main, been well accepted by the majority of Open Place service users. These changes have ensured the long term sustainability of the support funding component of Open Place.

The introduction of the nationwide program ‘*Find and connect*’ was launched at Open Place by Minister Jenny Macklin, the then Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, at Open Place on August 17, 2012. ‘*Find and Connect*’ provides an on-line ‘history and information’ support service for Australians who were placed in orphanages and institutions in their childhoods. With the launch of ‘Find and Connect’ came additional funding with more staff being appointed to Open Place in the areas of counselling, records and administration.

The revised Open Place’s service model had four core components as outlined below in Table 5:

Table 5: Open Place Model (from mid-2012)

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Records, Find and Connect | This component supports Forgotten Australians to access their institutional and ward records, family records and undertake family searches (www.openplace.org.au/RecordsFindandConnect) |
| Counselling | Counselling will be provided to Forgotten Australians and their immediate families organized through Open Place with either service counsellors or approved external counsellors |
| Coordinated support | The coordinated support program assists Forgotten Australians most in need through the provision of information, referral, casework and advocacy. There is a support fund that may be able to assist with specialist supports. (www.openplace.org.au/CoordinatedSupport). |
| Social support groups | Thirteen social and support groups operated throughout Victoria |

Changes were made to the monthly Friday lunches with staff assuming responsibility for providing lunch on the last Friday of the month when other activities were also run. In 2012, Open Place provided

services to over 950 Forgotten Australians. Services included information and advice, records and family searching, family reunions, counselling, support and social activities, and long term case work support and there were over 2000 registered service users.

4.5.1 Staffing changes

Over the three years of the evaluation, there have been a number of staff changes including the inaugural Manager who left Open Place in late 2011. There has also been additional staff appointed to the counselling program and to records.

4.6 Summary

As would be expected with the implementation of a new model, the Open Place approach evolved over the past three years to best meet the needs of Forgotten Australians.

#

Chapter 5: How Forgotten Australians experienced Open Place

5.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on how Forgotten Australians experienced Open Place. The areas discussed included assessment of helpfulness of the service and feedback on which service components influenced the perception of helpfulness. The relationship between how Forgotten Australians heard about the service and experience of helpfulness is also explored. The diversity of the experience of the participants using the service is noted. Factors associated with assessment of helpfulness of the service are presented first, and the components of the program influencing the assessment are explored supported by qualitative and quantitative data.

5.2 Method

To explore how Forgotten Australians experienced Open Place -- case studies, interviews, group interviews, an on-line, anonymous survey and observations of the service, and attendance at group discussions at regional groups and Saturday gatherings at Richmond were undertaken. The evaluation focussed upon how Forgotten Australians interpreted their experiences of Open Place as it related to their ongoing life experiences. The data was collected over a three year period. As noted in chapter 4, in 2012 the brokerage component ceased which caused distress to Forgotten Australians especially those who had not by this point accessed any of the funds. Initially in this evaluation, the responses from Forgotten Australians were separated into prior to and after this change. However, the analysis showed little difference in responses from the two groups on the areas examined. The main area of difference in responses for all categories examined was between those who attended Open Place and those who did not.

5.3 Factors associated with satisfaction of Open Place

In interviews and in the surveys, many Forgotten Australians prefaced their assessment of helpfulness and satisfaction with Open Place with the narrative of their early experience in institutions. Expectations of being treated poorly by Open Place were stated by some people. The stories of their expectations and experience with Open Place were referenced with the ongoing narrative of their life experiences. It was not unexpected that the level of satisfaction with Open Place and the perception of helpfulness of the program was influenced

by the past experiences of Forgotten Australians. Developing trust that the program was there to address their

| | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Not used any facilities | 20 | 16.3 |
| Computers | 7 | 5.7 |
| Kitchen | 12 | 9.8 |
| Meeting rooms | 3 | 2.4 |
| Multiple facilities | 8 | 6.5 |
| Not applicable | 3 | 2.4 |
| Other | 3 | 2.4 |

needs was difficult for some Forgotten Australians.

5.3.1 Service location

Perception of the appropriateness of the location of Open Place was surveyed. Those who attended Open Place were more positive about the service location than those who did not visit the service. Some commented that its central location made it accessible to the greatest number of people, Proximity to public transport was a strength, however some felt as they lived some distance away that it was ‘too far’ from their own home. The survey data revealed that 26% of all participants identified “too far from home” as the principal reason for not attending Open Place. Some made the suggestion, that there should be regional centres in Victoria to cater for those living in regional and rural areas. Those that attended Saturday gatherings, where some had travelled long distances, reported being satisfied with the location.

Service users were also asked how they liked the physical structure of the building. The survey data demonstrated that 17% of the participant population reported “it does not feel comfortable”. Most participants nevertheless seemed pleased with the physical surroundings and the provision of computers, the open kitchen and friendly staff. When clients were asked to identify the frequency they visited the centre and to identify and rank: 1) the entry foyer; 2) meeting rooms and; 3) the kitchen facilities, the kitchen was identified as the most used facility in the centre. When data were compared overall, no facilities were ranked more highly than any other. Notably, however, a high number of participants reported never having used any services at Open Place.

Table 6: Descriptive statistics of facilities’ use

| | | |
|--------------|----|--------|
| Missing | 67 | 54.5 |
| Total | 92 | 100.00 |

Nevertheless when clients were selected according to the frequency of their visits to the centre and a comparison was made of the rankings given to the centre facilities, it was found that the more regularly clients attended the centre the more highly they ranked the kitchen facilities above other facilities (Kruskal-Wallis comparison for ranked scores, $p < 0.5$).

One participant however, commented that attending Open Place was difficult for her and this seemed to be in part because of her sense that she did not belong – she described coming for meals as a revisiting of childhood trauma “every time I have a meal here, I feel; like I am back at the girls’ home”. All the talk is about what home you were in and the negativity of what is not being done here”. This participant commented about the “lack of trust” of Forgotten Australians stating that she thought many still to be “orphanage kids”. She commented that her external counsellor had told her she was “re-traumatizing herself” each time she went to Open Place, and when she had attended one of the suburban support groups, felt she was “back in the girls’ group”. This was in contrast to another participant who felt very much that coming to Open Place felt like being ‘home’ because of the immediate connections she had felt with other members. Feedback from another participant was that the opportunity to prepare meals was an important activity for promoting ownership of the centre.

5.3.2 Satisfaction with and Helpfulness at Open Place

An analysis of the survey was undertaken to determine if the satisfaction reported by clients could be associated other items. When focused analyses were performed it was identified that clients ranked their perceived satisfaction with Open Place higher when: 1) they were satisfied with the services they received in-house AND; 2) they were satisfied with the way Open Place managed their referral to other services. An unexpected finding of the survey was that satisfaction with Open Place was not linked to the receipt of financial assistance. Tables 7 and 8 below show that the receipt of financial assistance did not sway how

clients ranked Open Place on ‘Helpfulness’ either. When clients **had not received financial assistance** ‘Helpfulness’ was still identified by many participants.

Table 7. How helpful are the services at Open Place - did not receive financial assistance? N=46

| | Frequency | Percent |
|----------------|-----------|---------|
| Very unhelpful | 2 | 4.3 |
| Unhelpful | 6 | 13.0 |
| Not sure | 12 | 26.1 |
| Helpful | 7 | 15.2 |
| Very helpful | 17 | 37.0 |
| Missing | 2 | 4.3 |
| Total | 46 | 100.0 |

Of those who had **received financial assistance** the rankings given for Helpfulness or Unhelpfulness were at similar levels for those who had received financial assistance. A chi square analysis was undertaken to determine if rankings for Helpfulness between those who received financial assistance and those who did not was statistically sound. That comparison demonstrated that there was no statistical difference between these two groups in the way they ranked Helpfulness (see Table 8). #

Table 8. How helpful are the services at Open Place - did receive financial assistance? N=23

| | Frequency | Percent |
|----------------|-----------|---------|
| Very unhelpful | 2 | 8.7 |
| Unhelpful | 3 | 13.0 |
| Not sure | 6 | 26.1 |
| Helpful | 4 | 17.4 |
| Very helpful | 7 | 30.4 |
| Missing | 1 | 4.3 |
| Total | 23 | 100.0 |

Table 9. Mean rank for perceived Helpfulness given by Open Place compared according to whether clients received financial support or not

| How helpful are the services at Open Place | | |
|---|----|-----------|
| Have you received financial assistance from Open Place? | N | Mean Rank |
| Yes | 22 | 31.66 |
| No | 44 | 34.42 |
| Total | 66 | |

5.3.3 Reasons for perceptions of helpfulness

The experience of helpfulness was influenced by receipt of services and the service meeting the expectations of the Forgotten Australians. Those who were looking for reunions and social activities to contribute to social and emotional wellbeing were largely satisfied. There were comments on the helpfulness of staff and their ability to listen. The responses from the Forgotten Australians in this evaluation highlighted the message that each Forgotten Australian has unique experiences and the challenge for a service such as Open Place is to be able to provide a service which can engage this diverse group of people.

Many of the participants had sought a range of supports from Open Place including counselling, funds to access life skill activities such as yoga. One participant had accessed funds to purchase a sewing machine and a computer and was learning new skills about which she was obviously very proud. Some participants were critical of Forgotten Australians whose focus was on money, “people’s focus is upon compensation”.

“We all need hope and I can see no hope and no future and people don’t know about Forgotten Australians”.

A group of four Forgotten Australians were interviewed together at Open Place. They reported that they had been in orphanages for part of their childhoods and identified as ‘Forgotten Australians’ but saw themselves quite differently to others. Two of this group of participants were siblings and had looked out for each other whilst away from their parents’ care after the death of a parent and returned to live with family members when they were in late childhood. Two other participants identified their resilience in being able to lead successful family and professional lives. The group participants thought of themselves as different to others at Open Place with one commenting that *“many people here need a lot of help”*; *“some are not socially skilled”*, *“we’re a little bit different (two siblings)”* and none of this group saw themselves as part of a disadvantaged cohort. However one commented that Open Place was for them and they would not want their partner or adult children to attend. They spoke of the families they had established and the strength of their relationships. Each of them also attended their children’s home reunions and spoke of enjoying meeting up with those with whom they had spent much of their childhoods. The individual interviewees did not have similar experiences. One commented upon their need to try and come to terms with their past, having been institutionalized in a home for youth with intellectual disabilities and the loneliness of this experience. This participant was trying to locate people with whom they had been in care and was looking to form connections with peers from the past.

The “best part of Open Place was like coming home, making friends – everyone helpful”. “nice atmosphere”, “places you can go to, little rooms if you’re upset”. “Walk in and it’s comforting and warming” “sense of belonging” “you let your guard down” “guard is up among strangers” [as we] “can’t say a lot of things out there [outside of OP]”.... “tea and coffee [were] on tap”. Forgotten Australian

Some Forgotten Australians questioned the right of some participants to be called Forgotten Australians. One participant who had been involved with other organizations spoke of the need to be alert to the [organization] “spies” who had penetrated Open Place; this participant stated that they “*did not feel safe-watch ps and qs*”. It was not clear what the participant was fearful of but it was sufficient for them to be vigilant in their dealings with other service users at Open Place. It was clear however, that it was not a comment about Open Place’s service delivery approach but reflective of their anxiety about being somehow ‘caught out’ by others.

One participant described a complex journey in trying to find her identity. She had been adopted after spending a period in a girls’ orphanage and these memories were very potent for her. For this particular participant, there was also the complexity of determining whether other Forgotten Australians would allow her to claim this identity given she was eventually adopted – “*I don’t fit here (Open Place) due to different experiences, I don’t fit into any category*”. However, this participant had been coming regularly to Open Place and described connections to staff.

Table 10 summarises the feedback of Forgotten Australians from all data sources. The table highlights the diversity of need and the diversity of the experience of Forgotten Australians in relation to their engagement with Open Place. It provides a representative sample of comments made by Forgotten Australians as to their perception of the level of helpfulness they experienced of Open Place services.

Table 10 Reasons for rating 'helpfulness' at Open Place

| Impact of previous experiences | Negative Perceptions | Experience of service not being helpful | Expectations for Open Place |
|---|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind me of when we were in care favorites and speaking down • Being a ward had a massive all-encompassing negative affect on my life • So many were in it for what they could get for free and not for the real reasons for support and they still do • [Forgotten Australians are] walking autopsies the government want us to hurry up and die • I am an institutionalized person trying to find a spot in the community. • Workers take on authoritarian speak - division between who receives services, if you grew up in church orphanages you get the gold card treatment, if you grew up in Govt. owned institutions you are looked down upon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only CLAN members getting a newsletter and if you are not a member they will not assist you in anyway. members of • I struggle to relate to the turnover of unprofessional support workers within this service -- support workers each tell you something different and at times some are not approachable due to their mannerism, • the workers do not take criticism about how they perform as a positive, and they(worker) have a tendency to hold it against the F.A. who makes that complaint, this outcome contributes to the F.A. returning to isolating themselves and the fear of making further complaints, just like in the institutions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They were of no help at all my counsellor has given up waiting for phone call.. • No real services for rural communities, programs run from Richmond • My psychologist who is my life line • Living and working full time in a rural area I find Open place quite difficult to access • One of the complaints made by participants [in the early period] was in the time it sometimes took for workers to return calls and wanted to be called back quickly and found it unacceptable if they were not called back within the day which was often not the case in the beginnings of Open Place | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reunions • Institutions and siblings • Social outings • Do not need other services • Staff to advocate • Need public speaking training • Best things • Reunions • Social outings • Very open • Craft activities • Future fear nursing homes • Good supportive environment • Very intense . sad. • Welcoming reception staff • Well-coordinated services • My social skills improving and I'm gaining emotions that i shed a long time ago. • Welcoming • Nice atmosphere • Meeting rooms sense of belonging • You can let your guard down • Belong to a huge family |

5.4 Association between how Forgotten Australians first heard of the service and their perception of the helpfulness of the service.

Overall the marketing of Open Place to Forgotten Australians received positive responses. However a minority suggested that Open Place needed to be advertised more widely such as in doctors' surgeries and in local papers. The responsibility of the service to locate all Forgotten Australians was noted by some.

VANISH and CLAN were the primary services that referred Forgotten Australians to Open Place. All of the participants had sought out information about their past and had begun to seek out supports, laying claim to the identity of being a 'Forgotten Australian' prior to coming to Open Place. Some of the participants had been involved with CLAN for more than ten years and had been active in promoting the causes of Forgotten Australians. A Centrelink booklet also listed Open Place as a service for Forgotten Australians and others learnt about Open Place on the internet.

The association between the source by which clients received information about the services at Open Place and the level of satisfaction reported was of particular interest to the aims of this evaluation. Particularly, could the original source of information about Open Place services and subsequent satisfaction with those services been influenced by that point of entry or source (i.e. where the source of information came from sources such as newspapers, CLAN, VANISH, family, friends, advertising etc.). This question was examined after the frequency data were collated according to "how you heard about Open Place" a further analysis was undertaken. Firstly, those hearing about the service from CLAN or VANISH were combined into one client category (i.e. labeled Combined in Table 5 below). Then scores for Helpfulness were compared by way of chi square analysis according to 'how you heard about Open Place'. The results of that analysis demonstrate that the 'Combined group' ranked the perceived Helpfulness received from Open Place higher than other client groups with the exception of those who identified a friend as the source of information ($p < 0.5$). We cannot identify if the 'Friends' source has any relationship to any of the other sources listed.

Table 11. How helpful are the services at Open Place

| Heard about Open Place from - | N | Mean Rank |
|-------------------------------|----|-----------|
| Friends | 8 | 43.94 |
| Combined (CLAN or VANISH) | 18 | 41.61 |
| Other Forgotten Australians | 9 | 39.78 |
| Advertising | 6 | 35.42 |
| Other sources | 16 | 32.72 |
| Family | 6 | 24.08 |
| Newspapers | 3 | 12.67 |
| DHS | 3 | 12.67 |
| Total | 69 | |

The interviews and comments from the survey indicated that some non-CLAN and Vanish members perceived Open Place as favouring these groups' members with services and employment. While the perception of Helpfulness does not reflect any *actual* measure of the services and support given or received, it does substantiate some comments in the qualitative data.

5.5 Forgotten Australians expectations for Open Place

The expectations of Open Place were quite diverse and ranged from looking for the opportunity for reunions and social gatherings to expecting the service to address the wrongs experienced by the client group. For example two of the participants had expectations outside the mandate of Open Place. These included wanting Open Place to deliver an employment support service and the other, the provision of respite care post-surgery. These participants were disappointed in the level of support provided. Another participant commented that she considered that resources were distributed in a *"fair and just"* manner. This participant also commented that the knowledge base of staff was such that they could advise and direct you to other services as needed commenting *"If you can't get what you want from here, girls have the knowledge, I have not found anyone who is not committed to being helpful"*. This participant was less than impressed with some service users commenting on *"three dickheads"* who were always negative, stating that *"I choose to be positive, for not against"*. Another participant was clear that Open Place provided a *"sympathetic ear, this is a place to come, always a sympathetic ear, always welcome with smiles and a hug, beautiful girls"*.

After feeling unsafe at her first visit to Open Place, one participant persevered and after accessing funds for counselling and talking with a staff member, her view was that the program was supportive, [1] *“gave it another go, felt supported”*. This Forgotten Australian after attending the launch and afternoon tea had a more positive response. After attending Open Place up to ten times, she described her experiences as *“good and bad”*. Another Forgotten Australian commented upon arriving at Open Place to find a *“great big circle of people in the foyer, people fighting for money”*.

As most of the Forgotten Australians who attend Open Place, had been awaiting the arrival of a support service/redress system, their expectations of what Open Place could provide were considerable. Overall Forgotten Australians’ described their experiences of Open Place program favourably. Participants had accessed life skills, medical care and participated in support groups as well as other activities run by Open Place such as the lunches. Though none of the group participants interviewed spoke of any unhappiness with the changes that had occurred in services provided, they acknowledged that there were other Forgotten Australians who were *“upset about the changes”*. One participant commented that Government should provide all Forgotten Australians with the equivalent of a veterans’ Gold Card which would ensure that they had priority access to medical care and other benefits. The individual participant wondered what had happened to the funding now that the brokerage guidelines had been adjusted.

5.6 What ideas do you have for how the service could be improved?

There were a range of suggestions as to how the services could be improved and these reflected people’s understanding of what they considered Open Place was intended to provide. Educational opportunities that would improve people’s literacy and numeracy as well as employment access programs that were delivered by Open Place. Though people could access these programs readily in the general community, there was a strong sense that Forgotten Australians should have their own services. This would include the Federal Government providing a card similar to the Veterans’ Gold Card which would result in Forgotten Australians being able to access health and housing support without long waiting lists.

There were some participants who questioned the design of Open Place believing it should be completely operated by and for Forgotten Australians. This group alleged favouritism for services being an issue and that Clan and Vanish members were likely to be those favoured for receipt of services and for employment. Another group of participants was conscious of the lack of services for rural-based Forgotten Australians and disappointed that Open Place appeared to be urban-focussed.

Some participants were very conscious of the level of disadvantage that many fellow Forgotten Australians experienced as *“some are struggling very much”* and wanted to see more meals provided and a *‘drop-in’* focus as well as more excursions and social outings. They enjoyed these activities themselves but also felt that many required much more support. Reference was also made to how *“damaged, some are”* and that this group was very concerned about what would happen to vulnerable Forgotten Australians as they aged, fearful that they may be institutionalized again and that was a *“very scary”* prospect for many. In respect of changing anything, the group participants commented *“Don’t want to change anything”*. The individual participant would like additional social support opportunities identifying his loneliness and aloneness.

5.7 Peer mentors

The original program design included the role of peer mentors who would be available to Forgotten Australians and assist them to engage with the service. A group interview was undertaken early in the evaluation with the group of proposed peer mentors. The purpose was to discuss their expectations of being peer mentors, what this would involve, and how they viewed their role and would they be prepared to inform other Forgotten Australians about the research project. It was evident from the outset that a group interview was not an ideal vehicle for discussion. . When asked as to what they considered their role as peer mentors would involve, there were a range of responses. One participant commented *“..I’m not clear, a way of spending money”*. Another thought that they would be the inaugural group who would design a training package to support the recruitment and training of others to take out into the community, and peer mentors would also run the support groups (this was Open Place’s view). Another commented that they were told the *“job would emerge”*. It was apparent that each of the mentors was pleased to be part of the process with one commenting that *“I am a great believer in being part of the change not kick shit out of others”*. One spoke of the role being to educate the community about their experiences and set practice standards for the future. Another participant who was very involved with the children’s home from where she grew up was very proud of the progress she had made in dealing with issues of abuse and neglect. As this participant stated, *“I want people to know that I survived”* and *“I have a voice and will not be silenced”*. This participant had commenced further study as part of her recovery and felt empowered.

The participants did with one exception discuss their early experiences and considered that their selection as peer mentors reflected their skills and readiness to be part of the process. There was some sense that in respect of their role with other Forgotten Australians that this could be fraught as that there was much dissension in the Forgotten Australian community and resentment from many Forgotten Australians towards

other Forgotten Australians who tried to speak for them. Three of the participants later chose to participate in individual interviews and one contacted the evaluators several months later to be interviewed. One participant called the senior researcher to withdraw consent from the group interview data and all reference to this person has been removed.

5.8 Case Studies

Three case studies were completed with Forgotten Australians who regularly participated in the activities delivered by Open Place and for whom Open Place had become a major support in their lives. As details of the stories would identify the individuals a précis of each of their stories is outlined below:

*Aileen**

Aileen's journey into the care system began as a toddler when her mother no longer felt able to provide for her and she was relinquished into the informal care of an acquaintance of her mother's. Her new life with her 'adoptive parent' proved a very transient life one and Aileen had felt very vulnerable living in boarding houses which did not prove safe places for a young child without adequate supervision in inner city Melbourne. Aileen had very disrupted early schooling and did not complete school.

Whilst in primary school, Aileen was removed from her temporary parent and placed at the 'Depot' and was then placed in a children's home. When she came into care, Aileen's identity was uncertain as her 'adoptive mother' had changed her name and it was many years before Aileen was able to re-locate her birth mother. Aileen lived the remainder of her childhood and adolescence in the care system and though she found friendships along the way there was always an abiding sense of loss, of not belonging.

Aileen feels that growing up in an institutional setting has meant that she has found it hard to parent and is estranged from her children. She did not know how to demonstrate love for them though she ensured that they did not know the experience of being in care. Aileen describes "falling into" the identity of a Forgotten Australian. A friend found a booklet about Forgotten Australians and gave it to Aileen who subsequently contacted VANISH. From there she found Open Place and loves coming.

"These people are part of my family – accept me for whom I am, made to feel at ease, no 'excess baggage'.

Aileen has been coming to Open Place for three years and commented that she "feels blessed in so many ways"

*Leonard**

Leonard was placed in a boy's home as a primary aged child, the only one of his siblings placed in care. He describes a lifetime of abuse and neglect and struggles to understand how it was that no-one came to rescue him from the ongoing abuse. Leonard left school early and was sent to work as a farm labourer. Leonard feels the title 'Forgotten Australian' is indeed an apt one as they were forgotten children about whom no-one showed any care or concern. He has accessed his records but finds the memories too painful and does not want to read anymore. Leonard is committed to seeking justice for himself and other Forgotten Australians and bringing to justice those who abused him as a boy. He loves coming to Open Place and feels that it is a safe place for Forgotten Australians.

"They are good at Open Place – quite understanding , if a problem they can help...Everyone goes out of their way to help"

*Louisa**

Louisa was placed in an orphanage as a three year old where she spent much of her childhood and adolescence. However, Louisa's focus is on the future and she does not want to look back to the lonely and sad times of her early life. She is passionate about educating people about Forgotten Australians and gaining the skills that can equip her to go out into the community and speak to different groups. Louisa has many ideas about how to develop services for Forgotten Australians which she shares with Open Place staff. She loves coming to Open Place and considers that

"Without OP, none of us would be anywhere!"

5.9 Summary

The feedback from Forgotten Australians who responded to the interviews and surveys highlighted the diversity of this group. Most of those interviewed framed their expectations of the service and their experience of the service within their own life narrative. For many there were no boundaries between their history and the current service, for many the pain experienced in the past was still very real.

Forgotten Australians who had been very involved with earlier support services such as CLAN and VANISH and assumed an advocacy role for Forgotten Australians over the years had more expectations of what they considered Open Place could and should provide. Conversely, Forgotten Australians who had not been involved with Forgotten Australian groups (though may have attended home reunions) appeared to

have fewer expectations. The over-arching view from Forgotten Australians was one of satisfaction in relation to their experience of services provided and relationships with staff. #

Chapter 6: The Experience of Open Place Workers

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings from interviews undertaken with Open Place staff. In total 18 staff were interviewed over the duration of the evaluation. In most instances, interviews were conducted by two researchers and all took place at the Open Place office.

6.2. Access to Open Place

Open Place actively publicized the launch of the service broadly across related networks and government services such as Centrelink and 'word of mouth' across informal ' networks also proved to be an effective way of informing people about the service. Vanish was the most frequently cited referral point through which Forgotten Australians had come to Open Place.

Despite Open Place's central location which provides many public transport options, the very limited parking options were considered problematic especially for Forgotten Australians whose mobility was impaired. It was the view of some workers that these factors may deter Forgotten Australians from accessing the services.

The open plan design was chosen to create "*a cosy, friendly neighbourhood house, local drop-in*" space for Forgotten Australians that they could claim as their own with only the upstairs, administrative area considered a 'staff only' precinct. However, the lack of space for staff was considered problematic especially during the first twelve months of operation when staff were overwhelmed by the service demand. There was little chance for staff to find a space for reflection or 'time-out' given too that staff were also experiencing distress as they heard the stories from Forgotten Australians. This was noted to be especially problematic when the program opened and there was a significant number of service users attending the service. This was compounded by sometimes angry service users who did not consider that Open Place was effectively addressing their needs. There was a sense that the welcoming open space outweighed the staff concerns which decreased as the service unfolded and the demand for service plateaued.

Workers perceived that the capacity for Open Place in its earlier iteration to act as a 'drop-in' centre was problematic as there had not been sufficient recognition of the level of trauma experienced by many

Forgotten Australians. Many had been waiting a long time for a service specifically designed for them and their expectations may have been unrealistic in respect of how much Open Place could provide. Many Forgotten Australians having 'missed out' on much as children saw themselves in competition with their fellow Forgotten Australians for limited resources. Though workers were clear that Open Place is for "Forgotten Australians, their space and we need to remind ourselves", there was still a sense that staff needed some separate space whether it was to read a book alone at lunchtime or share a chat with a colleague. This was considered a well-being issue for some.

6.3 Services sought

Many workers considered that Forgotten Australians primarily wanted someone to talk to: the opportunity to share their story, be affirmed, not judged and for some older Forgotten Australians, having someone listen to their story for the first time. Though requests for counselling have remained constant since the service opened, initially the overwhelming service demand was for *brokerage* which was the fund that Forgotten Australians could apply to for medical (such as obtaining prescription glasses, dental work) and life skills (such as recreational activities) funds (see below for further discussion about brokerage). After mid-2012, the brokerage guidelines were amended and the *coordinated support program* was implemented as discussed earlier in the report. The coordinated support program manages the discretionary support fund that can be accessed for health and other support needs for aging and vulnerable Forgotten Australians.

The social support groups that Open Place workers attended and supported were considered to offer much support and nurturing for Forgotten Australians and be a great asset. They provided what was often missing from people's lives social connectedness and enabling the forging of friends and the reminiscing about times that only those who had been there could really understand.

6.4 Presenting issues

Workers reported that they found considerable heterogeneity amongst the 'Forgotten Australian' population. There are people whose lives mirror the general Australian population whilst others who have battled mental health problems, homelessness, incarceration, alcohol and other drug issues. All were confronted with issues of grief and loss, estrangement from their families, questioning how it was that they experienced such hurt and no-one protected them.

The workers identified that locating records and sorting through their pasts was very important to Forgotten Australians though this could be a very traumatic process. Sometimes Forgotten Australians would find

information within their records that contradicted what they had previously understood to be their story. This could be very confronting and re-traumatizing. Open Place workers through their support of Forgotten Australians in the search process were developing skills and knowledge about the importance of the supported release of records to Forgotten Australians. For some Forgotten Australians having a place to go where you could always find someone with whom to have a chat and a coffee was very important.

The demographic of people accessing Open Place ranges from people in their 40s to people in their 80s with the median age being in the 50s. However, there have been inquiries from more recent care leavers. Open Place's mandate is to work with Forgotten Australians from the 1920s to 1989 when the Children and Young Persons' Act was introduced. However, according to workers many Forgotten Australians expressed the view to staff that, the cut-off point should be the 1970s and should not include Child Migrants or members of the Stolen Generation as there were other supports in place for them.

It was estimated by workers that 60% of Forgotten Australians who attended Open Place had struggled in life with complex issues (inability to form relationships, parenting, drug and alcohol, mental health, imprisonment and homelessness) and the other 40% had been very successful in their lives across a range of domains. Guidelines around who constitutes a Forgotten Australian were considered vague by workers as it could reflect a few weeks in temporary care or a life time in an institution. There was a suggestion from some workers that the term 'Forgotten Australians' was problematic as it has been "*blown out*" and now refers to "*anyone who was in care*". Another worker identified that for some Forgotten Australians, the nomenclature had become what defined them, the total of who they were, their identity as "*people whose whole purpose or function is being a Forgotten Australian*". Therefore if the term loses its specificity then something may be lost for those who identify with it. The issue of identity is significant for many Forgotten Australians because they were often purposefully stripped of their identity by being given new names and birthdays for example when they entered the institutional care system.

Workers considered that there was some tension between the three groups for whom there had been Government inquiries (Stolen Generation, Child Migrants, and Forgotten Australians) as many Forgotten Australians "*wanted service just for them as they worked hard to achieve it*". Some Forgotten Australians thought because British Migrants and the Stolen Generation had had access to financial payouts, they should not be eligible to access Open Place's brokerage fund when it was in operation.

6.5 Brokerage

The initial Open Place program model included a *brokerage* component (see chapter 4) which proved challenging to administer. It was designed to improve Forgotten Australians access to services that could promote health and well-being as well as opportunities to develop skills that could assist them such as accessing educational programs. There was some thought from workers that the initial guidelines for obtaining brokerage were not clear and that this had led to some unsuccessful applicants considering the process to be less than transparent.. Subsequently, many Forgotten Australians considered that they had not received favourable outcomes compared to their peers. The importance of transparency in decision-making could not be under-estimated in particular in the allocation of individual funds.

Initially, decisions in respect of brokerage were to be made by a panel including external stakeholder representatives but this was rejected by Forgotten Australians who considered such an approach demeaning and reflective of how they had been treated historically. Workers reported that some Forgotten Australians challenged this approach stating that as this was a component of the model, they had the right to brokerage funds which should not be mediated by other service providers. The panel approach was perceived as being an assessment of their worthiness—something Forgotten Australians felt very strongly had characterized their lives. The arguments of the Forgotten Australians proved persuasive and it was agreed that it would be the Open Place Manager who made the decision. A review panel was only to be convened if there was an appeal against a decision.

Forgotten Australians were not aware initially of the amount of brokerage they could access and this had resulted in some thinking that other Forgotten Australians had done better than others. Workers stressed the importance of clarity and transparency in decision-making and processes as they felt Forgotten Australians had difficulty navigating 'grey' areas.

6.6 Development of Knowledge

Interviews with the staff at Open Place highlighted the specialised knowledge the workers were developing. Development of understanding of the experience of Forgotten Australians and the services that effectively assisted them was an aim of Open Place. It was clear that the workers were developing this knowledge.

The workers identified that Forgotten Australians need multiple and varied support options and cannot be categorized into one homogeneous group. There are many whose complex needs require service responses

across the system and no one service could realistically meet their needs for housing, social support, drug and alcohol counselling and other needs.

Workers also suggested that the adjustment to the brokerage component enabled Open Place to focus more upon the delivery of a support service to the most vulnerable Forgotten Australians via the introduction of the 'coordinated support' program.

Workers noted that there are many Forgotten Australians who lead highly successful lives and who are not seeking direct supports as such from Open Place. However, they felt great camaraderie with others who have shared similar childhoods to themselves and for whom meeting up with them is re-connecting with family. This is a population which receives little recognition. The workers suggested that from these people much could be learnt about resilience and survival, and more attention should be given to their experiences. In the opinion of the workers the development of 'coordinated support' provides a very targeted and supported service to the most vulnerable to improve health and well-being. The literature reviewed for the evaluation was sparse on discussions of designs of programs for Forgotten Australians. The learnings from Open Place in this regard will be beneficial.

Finally workers identified the importance of supervision and that workers need to be well-supported and their need for some 'quiet space' within Open Place needs to be balanced against creating any divide between workers and Forgotten Australians

6.7 Summary of worker responses

Themes to emerge from workers during the first year of Open Place's operation were very much influenced by the *overwhelming demands for service and finding ways to respond effectively in a timely yet responsive manner*. This meant juggling multiple expressed needs from Forgotten Australians and trying to attend to them; whilst simultaneously taking the time to be with an individual Forgotten Australian and listen to their story, paying them due respect. There were multiple and at times conflicting ideas about what Open Place could offer coming from both Forgotten Australians and workers. The role of Open Place varied from the idea of it as *"a cosy, friendly neighbourhood house, local drop-in, support each other that would focus on people as they needed"* which did not seem cognizant of the huge expectations that accompanied Open Place to a *'redress scheme'* that would provide financial support (i.e. brokerage). For many Forgotten Australians, access to funds was thought to be paramount to recovery especially for those who had struggled financially throughout their lives.

For workers especially in the early months of Open Place's operations, listening to the many distressing stories from Forgotten Australians resulted in some level of *'vicarious trauma'*. The inability at this point to take time for reflection and self-care due to overwhelming service requests meant that workers did not also have the time and space to process what they were experiencing. Workers also had to manage the occasionally critical and sometimes hostile reproaches of Forgotten Australians who were dissatisfied with the pace of workers' responses or who considered they had received not just an untimely service response but also an inadequate one and reported this on social media. There was a period when some workers were targeted in a negative social media campaign and felt intimidated by the often very personal vitriol. . . Staff demonstrated empathy and concern for Forgotten Australians but felt as individual workers and perhaps as a program they had been unprepared for the level of vitriol or of the impact of unfulfilled expectations. As one noted,

[we] 'Ran before we could walk'.

"Open Place enables [Forgotten Australians] to come in and talk to each other...they have ownership of Open Place] and are rightly proud".

Chapter 7: External providers' feedback -Survey findings

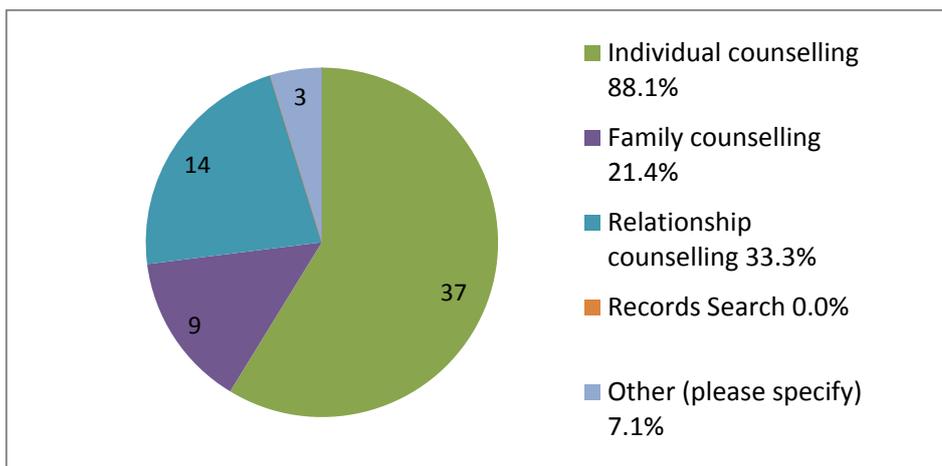
7. Introduction

This chapter presents the experiences of the external providers of services to Forgotten Australians who were referred from Open Place. The data was obtained from an on-line survey that was completed by the external providers. The external providers were notified of the survey by Open Place counsellors. The purpose of the survey was to gain an understanding of how external providers experienced the referral process of Open Place clients and their ongoing relationship with Open Place. It also sought the views of external providers in relation to the issues experienced by Forgotten Australians and the need for training and education to provide effective services. A total of 42 service providers completed or partially completed the survey.

7.1 External service provider surveys

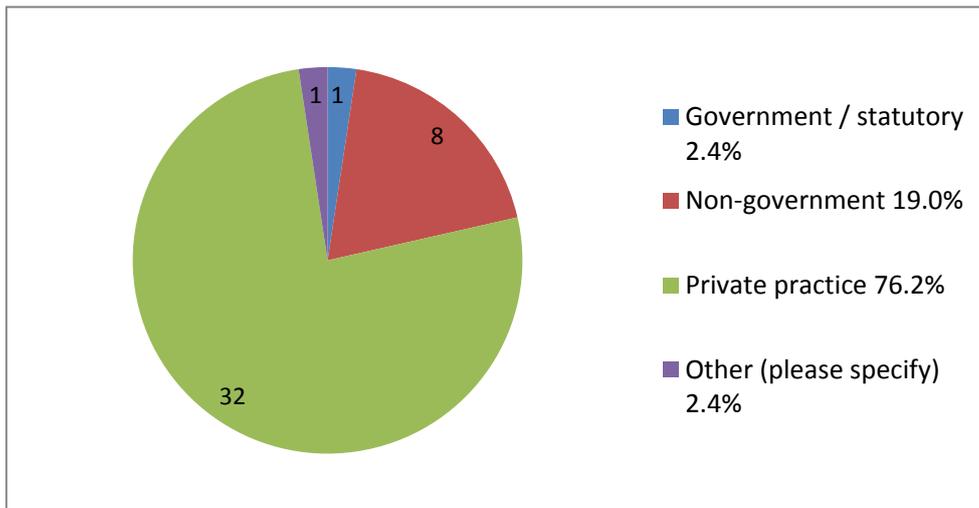
Chart one demonstrates that the majority of external service providers who responded to the survey provided individual counselling, followed by relationship and family counselling to Forgotten Australians.

Chart 1 Professional background of service provider N=42



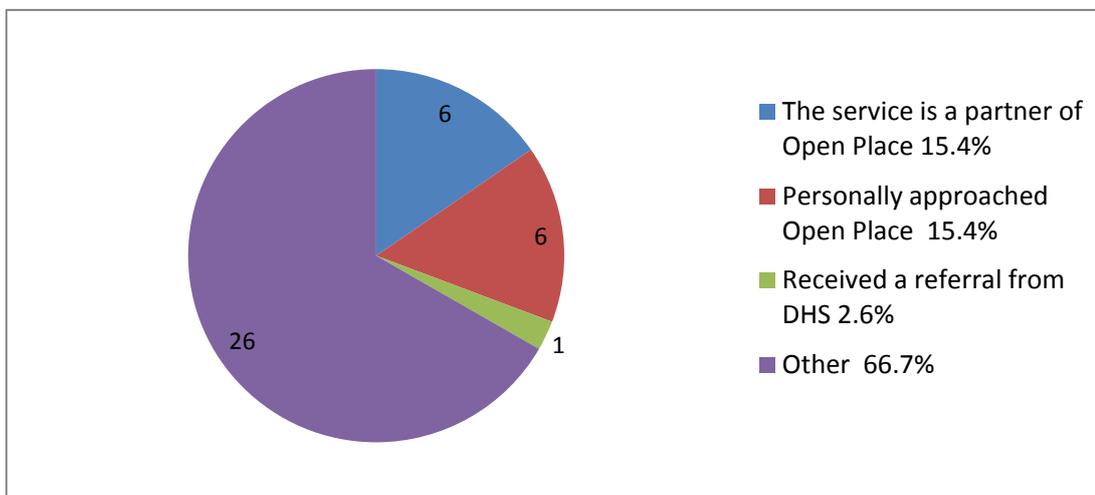
The majority of participants worked in private practice. Only 2% were employed by government and 19% were employed in non-government organisations. In respect of their professional background, the majority of participants, 46% or 19 individuals worked as psychologists; followed by 24% or 10 individuals who worked as counsellors. Three participants reported their position as *Manger or Director*. Of the remaining six participants, two reported being a relationship or family therapist; an unspecified therapist; a mental health social worker; and the remaining two were self-employed including a kinesiologist. Thirty-nine individuals identified their places of employment and of those 58% were in private practice, 24% worked at a counselling service, 12% worked at Relationships Australia and the remaining 2% worked at a medical centre

Chart 2: Service Context of providers N=42



The point of engagement for external service providers was evenly spread between those who were partners of Open Place (15.4%), and those who were initially approached by Open Place with a referral (15.4%). Another 20% were introduced to Open Place by clients. It would appear that these clients already had contact with a counsellor and wanted to continue with that person.

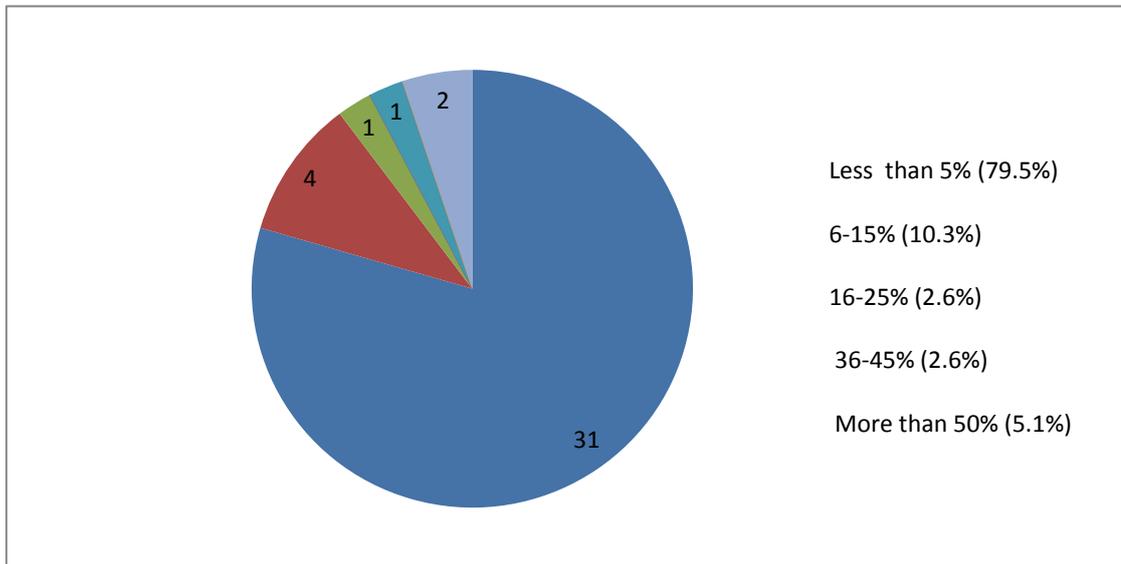
Chart 3: Initial Engagement with Open Place N=39



The survey asked participants to provide both the percentage of their current practice that comprises Forgotten Australians (see Chart 4) as well as the exact number of Forgotten Australian clients they have provided a service to since 1998. Of the 38 participants, 10 had provided a service to only one Forgotten Australian, while another 10 participants had provided a service to only two Forgotten Australians. Another 10 participants had provided services to between 3-10 Forgotten Australians. Of the remaining three

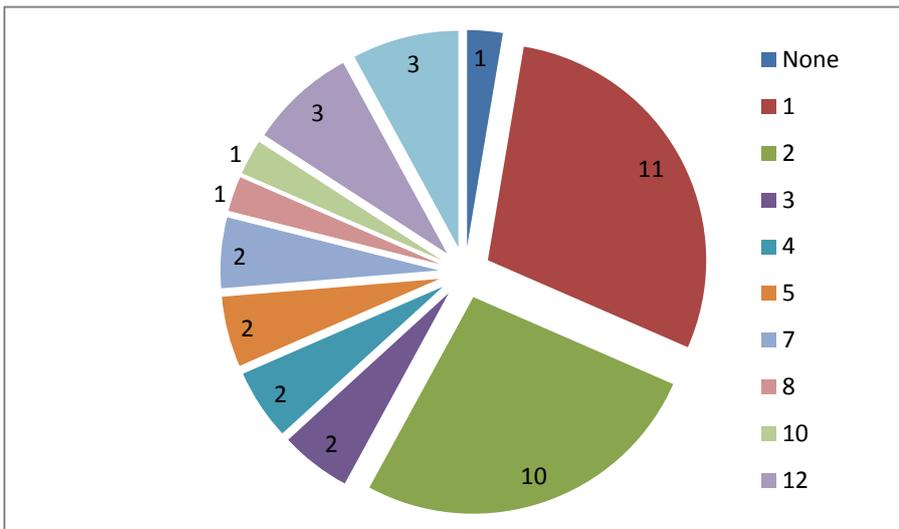
participants, one did not know, another reported “hundreds” and the final reported that over 50% of their practice was comprised of Forgotten Australians.

Chart 4: Percentage of the external providers’ current practice that is comprised of Forgotten Australians. N=38



It can be seen from this chart that Open Place referrals to individual practitioners ranged between 1 to 12. The reason for the spread of referrals is not known. However, it should be noted that Forgotten Australians were dispersed geographically and also had diverse needs. It would be worth investigating if Open Place could build up a smaller group of external providers as this would provide greater opportunity for closer engagement. Thirty-six participants felt the referral they received was appropriate while one participant felt the referral was inappropriate. Two different comments were made in this section, either of which could be the reason for the participant feeling the referral was inappropriate: the first being that their service was too far from the client’s residence and the second, that the client was in need of a case management service not a counselling service.

Chart 5: Referrals received from Open Place N=36



As evidenced from chart six, the main means of client referral from Open Place was via the telephone. Five of the nine participants who checked 'other', reported that the referral was made via email.

Chart 6: Method of referral N=38

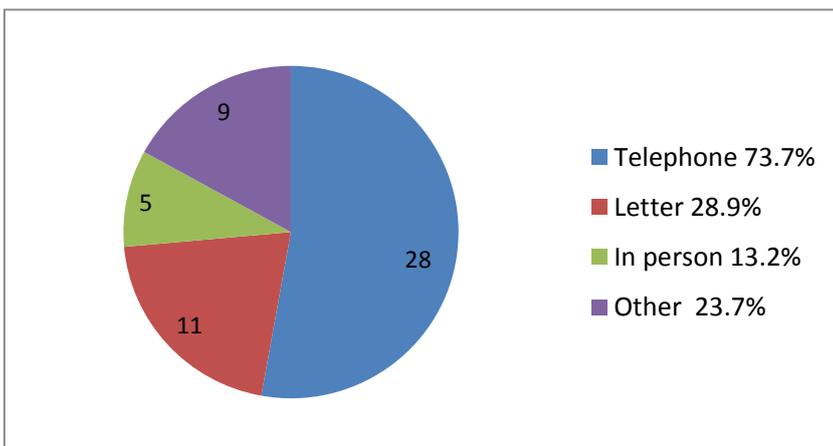


Chart 7: Level of satisfaction with the referral process N=38

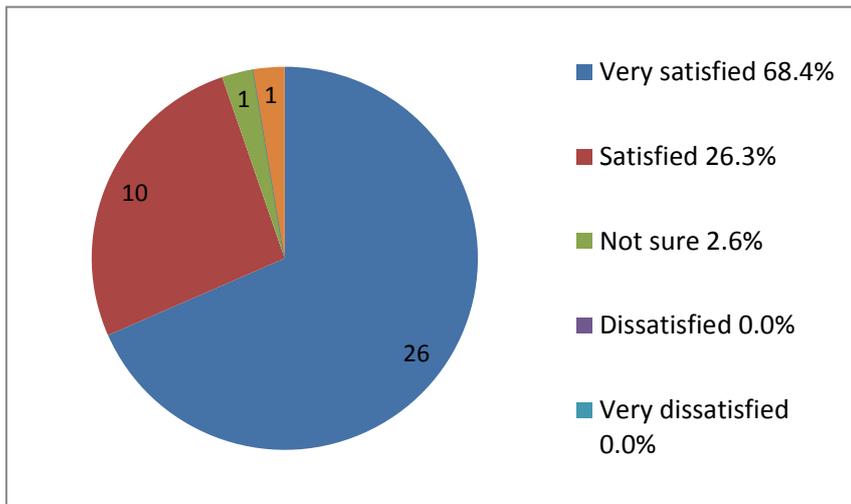


Chart 7 presents the external providers level of satisfaction with the referral process. It can be seen that over 90% were very satisfied or satisfied. Whilst there was overall satisfaction with referrals from Open Place, the external providers identified issues which could be addressed to improve their satisfaction. One stated that an improvement would be follow-up by Open Place, and another stated that written or verbal discussions of the clients may assist in the provider managing clients' distress. There was also some concern expressed regarding how the external provider had been identified by Open Place. For one person the referrals stopped when the staff member they had contact with at Open Place left the service.

"I was given these two clients however I don't really know how they got my name and then once the original referring worker left I haven't heard from them again".

"A written or even verbal discussion about the client may be helpful to understand the level of distress"

"Given that my one client engaged well I was surprised that I did not receive any further referrals"

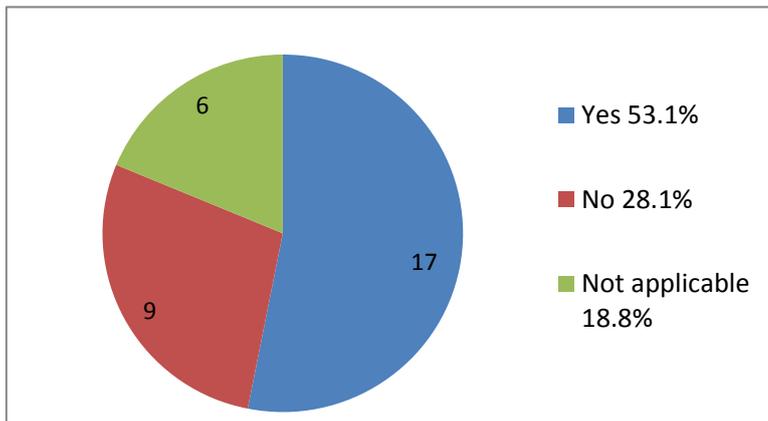
The feedback suggests that there could be more engagement with the external providers. There is also the opportunity to work with this group to identify expertise required to work with Forgotten Australians and obtain feedback from Forgotten Australians.

Training and Professional Development

Until relatively recently there had been little recognition of the diverse and complex needs of Forgotten Australians. Of the 38 participants 60% (23 people) providing services none had received any specialist training in regards to the needs of Forgotten Australians. Of those who had received training, 5 cited Open Place or

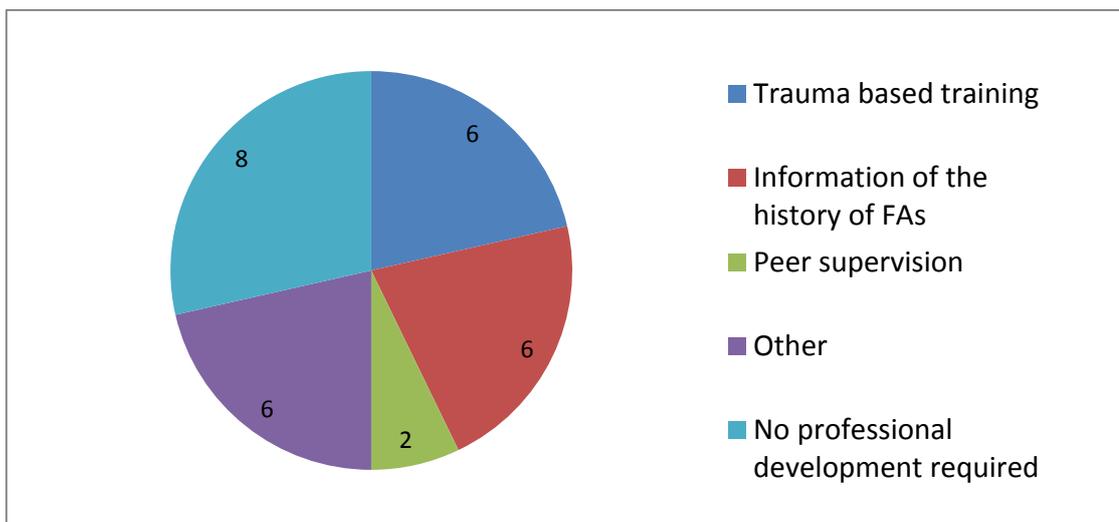
Berry “Street as providing the training and two received supervision from Open Place”. Training in relation to trauma and attachment were topics identified. All noted that the training they had received was useful or very useful. As shown in chart eight, of the 32 responses, the majority would be interested in attending training.

Chart 8: Level of interest in attending training of those who had no specialised training to work with Forgotten Australians N=32



The majority (53%) of participants wanted more training. Twenty four participants were not interested in training and of these; eight felt they did not require anything either because Forgotten Australians made up only a very small percentage of their client load, they were receiving supervision, or because they felt very equipped to effectively work with this client group. The remaining responses for identifying professional development needs can be broadly categorised in the following way: trauma-based education and training; peer supervision and or discussion; information of the history and experience of Forgotten Australians and other as seen in Chart 9.

Chart 9: Professional development to assist you in your work with Forgotten Australians .N=24



Other responses included::

- “Referral pathways to support clients”
- “Knowledge of the process of claiming compensation”
- “Management of dissociative behaviours”
- “Training regarding the generic issues facing FAs”
- “Connecting with other – empathy”
- “Development of national practice standards for service delivery”

A high number of participants did not identify a need for professional development. The issues experienced by Forgotten Australians were identified by the participants as multiple and complex. Table 12 summarizes the issues noted. One participant stated “[Forgotten Australians] are usually suffering from the some type of disengagement from society, lots of relationship breakups etc.”, and another noted the “lack of empathy with the community and those they are in a relationship with”. Trauma was a common theme. While phrased differently by participants this was another key concern, that this client group is often marginalised and that the impact of their childhood abuse and trauma continues to manifest in complex and multiple ways in their adult lives.

Table 12: Issues Forgotten Australians brought to external providers as identified by external providers. N= 25

Emotional Health

- Multiple losses
- Attachment issues; Negative ideas of how the world works
- Impact of sexual abuse
- Lack of opportunity to develop secure attachment
- Emotional suppression maintained by dissociative and addictive behaviour
- Psychological emotional and physical health problems arising from traumatic childhood experiences, including abuse, neglect, and systems abuse in primary health care.
- Impact on daily living – well-being
- Denial and reluctance to face issues
- Impact on everyday life of experiences and journey in institution;
- difficulty in coping with most aspects of normal everyday life.,
- current lives re-traumatising
- Relationship issues
- Unrealistic expectations re compensation

Structural issues

- Not enough professional networking
- Injustice and terrible complicity of Government and other institutions especially churches in covering up and excusing their role as perpetrators of horrific abuse and lack of accountability

When asked what Open Place could do to improve the service, the majority of participants commented that they would not change anything and that their Forgotten Australian client was happy with Open Place. Those who identified changes noted the need for more resources and more counselling sessions.

7.2 Summary of responses to on-line survey

The service providers who completed the on-line survey were predominantly counsellors in private practice who had been referred Forgotten Australians by Open Place. Most practitioners considered the relationship they had with Open Place to be a positive one. There was a common opinion that Open Place was doing a “good job” in providing support to Forgotten Australians. The service providers considered counselling to be very important for Forgotten Australians. They expressed the view that Forgotten Australians due to their levels of distress and trauma often required long-term therapy which should be funded by Government. Though many practitioners had not previously delivered service to Forgotten Australians, few identified that they needed professional support to work with this group.

The survey identified a gap in relation to professionals who have expertise in working with forgotten Australians. It also suggested that Forgotten Australians tend to want to stay in counselling with their own therapist, understandable given the issues of secure attachment experienced by many. The survey highlighted the importance of the training offered by Open Place. It is suggested that this is something which could be further developed and a community of practice established.

7.3 Themes to emerge with members of the Task environment

The evaluators explored the perception of Open Place held by key organisations and individuals who work with Forgotten Australians. Six individuals were interviewed. The organisations included government, community service organisations and self-help organisations. Participants were asked how they interacted with Open Place, whether they had a formal partnership with Open Place, their assessment of how Open Place met the needs of forgotten Australians including their own client feedback and their suggestions for improvement or change.

The interviewees commended Open Place on its ability to manage a steep learning curve which was required to provide a service to a complex group from the commencement of the service. They commented that despite the steep learning curve in delivering services to this vulnerable and traumatised population,

Open Place has forged good relationships with stakeholders. All participants said that Open Place was delivering a good service to its constituents.

A theme arising from the interviews was the emphasis on the importance of acknowledging and working with the deep abiding trauma that characterizes many Forgotten Australians. As noted earlier in chapter 2, a 'best practice' approach to service delivery to Forgotten Australians would be trauma-informed. The interviewees stress the importance of services being designed and conducted with well trained staff to respond to the sometimes overwhelming needs this special group demonstrates. The importance of understanding the diversity of the group was also stressed.

There are three areas in which the members of the task environment indicated Open Place could do more. The first was utilising the knowledge Open Place has developed and recognising the importance of training to educate future practitioners about the impacts of institutionalization upon children growing up away from their families. Associated with this theme was the need for more advocacy for Forgotten Australians with Governments and the community. The purpose of advocacy is to ensure such systemic abuse does not occur again and that Forgotten Australians are effectively assisted. Interviewees stated that Open Place was in a good place to do this and they would like to see more advocacy.

Interviewees also considered that the provision of educational opportunities for Forgotten Australians was an area that needed to be developed. Many Forgotten Australians experienced disrupted schooling and little engagement with post-school formal education programs. The Forgotten Australians need special assistance to be able to effectively engage in formal education.

Another theme from the interviews with the task environment members was recognition of the specialized needs and often premature ageing of Forgotten Australians and that State and Federal Governments should revisit the eligibility criteria for aged care services. Some interviewees pointed out that many Forgotten Australians will require such supports much earlier than the general population. Another theme was recognition that many Forgotten Australians are also very worried about ending their lives in institutional care so this needs to be taken into account for any planning for aging Forgotten Australians but also ensuring that they are not left alone

7.3 Summary of themes from the task environment

Members of the task environment spoke favourably of how Open Place was addressing the needs of Forgotten Australians. The areas they would like to see more activity delivered by Open Place were in advocating to

governments on behalf of Forgotten Australians and also in promoting education opportunities for Forgotten Australians.

Chapter 8: Discussion

8.1 Introduction

Walk in and it's comforting and warming.....sense of belonging “

(Forgotten Australian)

The above comment is from a Forgotten Australian, expressing how she felt when she came to Open Place in Richmond. Open Place was established by the Victorian Government to address the needs of Forgotten Australians following the Federal Government Apology on November 16, 2009. Until the establishment of Open Place, the support for Forgotten Australians came from self-help groups such as CLAN (2000) and VANISH (1989) and initiatives from some Community Service Organisations such as Mackillop Family Services and Berry Street. The complex and diverse needs of Forgotten Australians were recognised in the Victorian Government's call for the establishment of a program to begin to address these needs. The evaluation report traces the overwhelming evidence from Australian and International literature of the harm and injustice caused to so many and the need for programs such as Open Place to provide a focus for addressing these needs. The report traces the development of Open Place, the changes that occurred over time and the experiences of Forgotten Australians who have utilised the services. Whilst there is no doubt that for many the program has provided the support and assistance it was designed to provide; the evaluation suggests there is still much to be done for this group of people.

8.2 Discussion of findings

This chapter elaborates on the success and challenges for Open Place and summarizes the themes that have been identified in the findings. The findings have been drawn from the triangulation of data from the differing data sources over the three waves of data collection. The evaluation has demonstrated that Open Place has met its objectives as highlighted in Table 13. The outputs and outcomes table was included in the tender submission to DHS. Whilst over time there have been changes to the program; the chart highlights the initial intent of the program. A third column has been added to summarize the findings of the evaluation in relation to the o

Table 13 Outputs and outcomes

| OUTPUTS | OUTCOMES | Evaluation |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Consultation</p> <p>Regular, open communication with care leavers across Victoria</p> <p>Care leaver input into policy formation, service development and effectiveness</p> <p>Quarterly consultations across the State (initially in Melbourne X 2), Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong with flexibility to add and or change locations as indicated by the numbers and needs of care leavers;</p> <p>Consultations advertized in metropolitan, statewide and provincial print emdia</p> <p>Website feedback mechanisms so users, care leavers interstate and overseas can provide comments and feedback</p> | <p>Forgotten Australians</p> <p>Engagement and contribution to governance and ongoing formation of the Open palce service</p> <p>Self-reported satisfaction with the servicie meeting individuals' needs</p> | <p>Open Place staff embarked upon eight consultations throughout regional Victoria and metropolitan Melbourne in its first year of operation (p. 46)</p> <p>The Open Place website has a feedback mechanism for general comments as well as a 'making a complaint' section (p.</p> <p>Open Place implemented a 'reference group' which included Forgotten Australian representatives (p. 45). However, due to the diversity of the Forgotten Australian population and the different representative groups this did not work well. (p. 47)</p> |
| PLACE BASED SERVICE | | |
| <p>Hospitality, belonging</p> <p>Meals program</p> <p>Open, flexible, including weekends for support groups</p> | <p>Forgotten Australians</p> <p>Increased sense of belonging</p> <p>Increased social, emotional and physical well-being</p> <p>Increased social connectedness</p> <p>Self-reported satisfaction with the service-meeting individual needs</p> | <p>Open Place held regular social activities including the weekly Friday 'cook-up' and increasing numbers of Forgotten Australians began dropping into the service (p.46)</p> <p>Monthly Saturday support group run at Richmond</p> <p>Feedback from interviews with Forgotten Australians who attend Open Place regarding their high level of satisfaction with services (p.53, 54)</p> |
| CO-LOCATION | | |
| <p>Enhance connection to other services through co-location where possible</p> | <p>Forgotten Australians</p> <p>Enhanced access to a great range of services</p> <p>Access to dedicated support for family members which enhances the wellbeing of care leavers</p> <p>Services that care leavers access</p> <p>Establishment of effective referral mechanisms for care leavers</p> <p>Increased awareness of issues facing care leavers</p> <p>Developing expertise in responding to the needs of care leavers</p> <p>Self-reported satisfaction with the service meeting care leavers' needs</p> | <p>DHS staff attended Open Place on a monthly basis to support record searching before launch of Find and Connect which provided additional funds to support the records' process (p. 51).</p> <p>DHS personnel attend Open Place on a regular basis</p> <p>It is not clear with the evaluation that Open Place has been able to deliver dedicated supports to extended family members.</p> <p>Effective referral pathways have been established as noted by external providers (chapter 7)</p> <p>Feedback from interviews with Forgotten Australians who attend Open Place regarding their high level of satisfaction with services (p.53, 54)</p> |

| OUTPUTS | OUTCOMES | |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Counselling</p> <p>With Open Place clinicians With RAV counsellors With counsellors currently engaged with individuals With brokered private counsellors Psycho-social groupwork</p> | <p>Forgotten Australians Increased social, emotional and physical wellbeing Increased understanding of past experiences and how these have impacted on their lives Access to dedicated support to family members which enhances wellbeing of care leavers Self-reported satisfaction with the service-meeting individuals' needs Services that Care Leavers access Development of expertise in responding to the needs of care leavers</p> | <p>The initial plan to implement goal attainment scaling was rejected by Forgotten Australians. The only measure of this outcome is the level of satisfaction expressed by Forgotten Australians and the positive feedback from the external providers.</p> |
| <p>SEARCH AND REUNIFICATION SERVICES</p> | <p>Forgotten Australians Increased social, emotional and physical well-being Increased sense of belonging Self-reported satisfaction with the service-meeting individuals' needs Services that care leavers access Establishment of effective referral mechanisms for care leavers Increased awareness of issues facing care leavers Developing expertise in responding to the needs of care leavers</p> <p>Current care system Stronger focus on accessible and well maintained records for children in care</p> | <p>Forgotten Australians have identified that through connections with Open Place that they have a strong sense of belonging (p. 66, 67)</p> <p>Referral pathways were considered to be well established by external providers (chapter 7)</p> <p>Open Place staff have much expertise in responding to the needs of care leavers (chapter 5)</p> <p>This was not part of the evaluation</p> |
| <p>PEER EDUCATION AND SUPPORT</p> | <p>Forgotten Australians Engagement & contribution to governance and ongoing formation of the Open Place services</p> <p>Improved educational workforce engagement Improved financial and housing stability Increased social, emotional and physical wellbeing Increased sense of wellbeing Increased sense of belonging Increased social connectedness Increased understanding of past experiences and how these have impacted on their lives Enhanced access to great range of services</p> | <p>.</p> <p>This occurred in the implementation. It is not clear how it is occurring now.</p> <p>Three peer mentors completed the program and have been engaged in some community education—it is unclear whether they have been involved in contacting these systems</p> <p>The evaluators were unable to access this level of detail. Forgotten Australians reported satisfaction with the service</p> <p>Open Place staff have much expertise in responding to the needs of care leavers (chapter 5)</p> |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | <p>Self-reported satisfaction with the service-meeting individuals' needs</p> <p>Services that care leavers access</p> <p>Education of workforce</p> <p>Increased awareness of issues facing care leavers</p> | <p>Open Place Counsellors established support networks for counsellors to whom they refer</p> <p>Forgotten Australians (chapter 7)</p> |
|--|---|--|

| OUTPUTS | OUTCOMES | |
|--|--|---|
| | <p>Development of expertise in responding to the needs of care leavers</p> <p>Current care system</p> <p>Service development for current children in care informed more deliberately by experiences in the past</p> | <p>Open Place staff have much expertise in responding to the needs of care leavers (chapter 5)</p> |
| LIFE SKILLS/VOCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT | | |
| <p>Tailored small, individualized vocational and life skills support</p> | <p>Forgotten Australians</p> <p>Improved educational workforce engagement</p> <p>Improved financial and housing stability</p> <p>Increased social, emotional and physical wellbeing</p> <p>Increased sense of wellbeing</p> <p>Increased social connectedness</p> <p>Self-reported satisfaction with the service-meeting individuals' needs</p> | <p>These outcomes were not measured in the evaluation.</p> <p>Feedback from interviews with Forgotten Australians who attend Open Place regarding their high level of satisfaction with services (p.53, 54)</p> |
| SUPPORT GROUPS | | |
| <p>Supporting existing support groups through Glastonbury, CAFS, St Luke's</p> <p>Support of new Support Groups if requested by care leavers</p> | <p>Forgotten Australians</p> <p>Increased social, emotional and physical wellbeing</p> <p>Increased sense of belonging</p> <p>Increased social connectedness</p> <p>Increased understanding of past experiences and how these have impacted on their lives</p> <p>Enhanced access to great range of services</p> <p>Self-reported satisfaction with the service-meeting individuals' needs</p> <p>Current system</p> <p>Active monitoring of care leaver needs</p> | <p>Open Place committed to supporting regional and metropolitan social support groups already in operation when the program started and have supported the development of more groups (chapter 4)</p> |
| ACTION RESEARCH PROCESS | | |
| | <p>Forgotten Australians</p> <p>Engagement and contribution to governance and ongoing formation of Open Place services</p> <p>Services that Care Leavers Access</p> | <p>Forgotten Australians were part of the initial reference group but this was disbanded. Interviews were held with peer mentors and the staff.</p> |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| | <p>Education of workforce Increased awareness of issues facing care leavers</p> <p>Current care system Service development for current children in care informed more deliberately to experiences in the past Active monitoring of care leaver needs</p> | <p>This was provided to external providers. External providers reported an understanding of the issues facsign forgotten Austrlains</p> <p>Not evaluated.</p> |
|--|--|---|

8.3 Reflections and implications of the findings

Open Place has been successful in meeting its objectives. The experiences of Forgotten Australians who use Open Place services are in the majority, positive. However for a group with complex and diverse needs, it is also clear that one program cannot meet the needs of all. Other stakeholders, the partners, the external providers and agencies reported positively on their engagement with Open Place noting that from their perspective Open Place was meeting the objectives of the program,

The values and principles which formed the foundation for the program were apparent in the implementation of the program. There was a respectful and consultative approach with Forgotten Australians; the physical design of Open Place aimed to be welcoming and provide group and private space; and the attitude of staff and the recognition of the importance and sensitive nature of the work were apparent. This is not to say it was without controversy.

Not all Forgotten Australians were happy with the awarding of either the contract to Berry Street or the implementation approach. This was reflected in their attitude to Open Place. The attitude of some Forgotten Australians at the commencement of Open Place did impact on staff causing levels of stress for individual staff. It also influenced changes to the governance structure of the program. Changes were made over time to the program structure and the opposition of a particular group of Forgotten Australians lessened. An emerging theme is the challenge of how to support extremely vulnerable adults whose early life experiences have resulted in them being “stuck” developmentally. This impacts on service users’ approach to and expectations of the service as well as being challenging for services in seeking how to identify the service context.

In its contact with external providers Open Place is seen as a source of knowledge for education in providing effective services to Forgotten Australians. Feedback from staff suggests that the developing of

knowledge is occurring. This is an area that could be further developed as the knowledge gained by Open Place can be used to assist in understanding approaches to addressing the painful and diverse needs of Forgotten Australians.

8.4 Experience of Forgotten Australians

The feedback from Forgotten Australians and the review of international literature highlight that no one program can meet the needs of all Forgotten Australians. This has been a constant theme throughout the evaluation. The stories told by Forgotten Australians of their experiences in Institutions and their lives since are all unique. There has been some attempt to categorise the groups of care leavers in the International literature within the context of abuse experienced (see Table 1 *Characterisation of individual need from a population of adult survivors of sexual institutional abuse - Irish Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse*). Overwhelmingly, the impact of neglect, abuse, trauma and the lack of opportunity for positive attachment has had long term impacts on health and social-emotional wellbeing and disrupted relationships (CoE 2006; Clan 2011). These consequences are part of the stories of many of those using Open Place. In each of these stories there is also the unique resilience which supports the person to survive. Open Place workers have identified the need to understand more about how this group develops resilience. There are also those whose experience caused less trauma and who have been able to maintain reasonable health and long term relationships. Each of these people utilise Open Place with different attitudes, needs and expectations. This impacts on how people utilise Open Place services, which services they utilise and their degree of satisfaction.

Forgotten Australians are not a homogenous group and have diverse needs and one approach does not meet the needs of all. The considerable diversity with service users who are deeply traumatized by their experiences requires a customised approach (Interview with worker)

The first two years of the program were strongly influenced by the brokerage component and concerns of process and eligibility. It is of note however that the overall satisfaction with the program did not differ significantly whether or not Forgotten Australians accessed the brokerage. This suggests that the value of Open Place to many was in the other services they could access. These included the opportunity to join with other Forgotten Australians, the use of the facilities of Open Place, counselling, sharing knowledge and social events. The difference in the level of satisfaction was influenced by whether or not Forgotten Australians accessed Open Place. Those who did not were largely negative about the program.

Childhood experiences also impact on the high degree of sensitivity to perceptions of fairness and justice and being left out. Some Forgotten Australians perceived favouritism in the selection of peer mentors

and staff. Also some were concerned with the extra cost charged for some outings or that they were asked to bring food to gatherings, whilst for others the latter was a way of expressing themselves. It appeared that Open Place made every effort to consult and ensure that favouritism was not occurring but that did not alter the perceptions of some.

There is a lack of clarity as to who constitutes a Forgotten Australian – ranging from spending one’s entire childhood and youth in institutional care to someone who spent two weeks in respite care for two weeks whilst their mother had a baby. This is a contentious issue for Forgotten Australians and service providers and impacts upon how the program is perceived (Interview with worker).

The findings highlighted the importance of a safe space for Forgotten Australians to share their stories with others. It was noticeable that in all interviews with Forgotten Australians, the narratives of pain and of survival formed the foundation for their responses. The importance of reunions, of making contact with people who had shared the experience also came through strongly reinforcing the importance of these programs.

Many Forgotten Australians have formed their identity as Forgotten Australians and their sense of self is connected to this identity. Their experience has become their story and it is important that the service recognises this. The importance of being seen as unique was very strong. This is a challenge for the program

A number of responses highlighted the additional issues for those who lived in rural and regional areas. Open Place supported these groups and Open Place staff travelled to regional areas to meet with the groups. Whilst for many this was welcomed, there was still a sense that they wanted their own physical space.

Open Place is meeting diverse needs of forgotten Australians. It is welcoming and respectful. The variety of services allows people to determine what it is they need for themselves. The opportunity to learn new skills, access computers, quiet rooms and counsellors as well as social outings and gatherings were all noted positively.

8.5 Governance

Open Place from the beginning acknowledged that ownership of the Open Place program was important to Forgotten Australians as a group. The initial structure of the Reference Group which included Forgotten Australians however was discontinued due to oppositional behaviour making it unworkable. During this process there was confusion and uncertainty regarding Governance. Other changes which occurred later were

a change in the partnership arrangements. Despite this, the consultations with Forgotten Australian Groups continued and overall there is satisfaction with the current Governance model.

8.6 Program

The implementation of the program required some changes to the overall design. It was noted that some Forgotten Australians found changes to programs difficult to cope with. It is important that Forgotten Australians are well-informed about program changes and what is happening at Open Place – a lack of clarity can create an untrusting culture

The diverse needs of Forgotten Australians have been highlighted. For example, some Forgotten Australians had expectations that Open Place would be able to act as an employment agency or provide personal care. The disappointment when expectations were not met flowed into the person's perception of the helpfulness of Open Place in general. Feeling left out or discriminated against is close to the surface for many.

The early implementation of the brokerage program caused much anxiety and anger. It was considered by some Forgotten Australians as compensation and hence they should have the right to access funds without assessment. Open Place responded to address the concerns of the participants but for some this was never really resolved.

Open Place is in a position to generate knowledge in relation to working with Forgotten Australians. The high level of trauma experienced by Forgotten Australians and its impacts is addressed but less acknowledged is the resilience of this group. A practice development group of staff and external providers in consultation with Forgotten Australians may be one way of developing this knowledge further. Open Place appears to be the major educator of external providers in this area and the training offered is noted as valuable.

8.7 Staff

"Open Place enables [Forgotten Australians] to come in and talk to each other...they have ownership of Open Place] and are rightly proud" (Staff member).

During the implementation of Open Place, it was clear staff were under considerable pressure. A number of staff spoke of difficulties in engaging with very hostile Forgotten Australians. Social media was used by some Forgotten Australians to denigrate some staff. Despite this, Open Place staff appeared to avoid an 'us and

them' approach and in discussion demonstrated an understanding of the rationale for the behaviour of some hostile participants. The staff clearly tried to engage all participants.

The interviews and meetings with staff highlighted the knowledge which the workers were developing in understanding the needs of Forgotten Australians and effective ways of working with them. It is important that this knowledge is further explored and disseminated in training as there is little in the literature about what works for Forgotten Australians in relation to services.

The physical layout of Open Place and the shared spaces also caused issues for some staff. There was a feeling expressed by some of always being visible and a lack of boundaries for personal space. This along with the risk of vicarious trauma identifies the skill and knowledge required to work effectively in this area. Supervision was mentioned by a number of staff as being particular important.

Workers need to be well-supported and their need for some 'quiet space' within Open Place needs to be balanced against creating any divide between workers and Forgotten Australians

8.8 External service providers

External providers and other members of the sector were very positive about their contact with Open Place. The process of referrals was considered highly satisfactory as was Open Place's cooperation with other service providers in the sector. As noted above, the training provided by Open Place was highly valued. It was the only training in this specific knowledge area that many had received. This highlights the importance of Open Place developing and disseminating its practice knowledge. Related areas of training in relation to understanding trauma and attachment had been undertaken by most external providers. It was concerning that a significant number of external providers did not perceive a need for specialist training in working with Forgotten Australians. The reasons for this were that they formed only a small percentage of the providers' clients. This is concerning as the expertise to work with Forgotten Australians is unlikely to be developed unless there is specific training.

8.9 Summary

The themes arising from the evaluation's findings highlight that the work undertaken by Open Place is challenging and complex. It is unrealistic to expect one program to address the years of neglect, abuse and their consequences which Forgotten Australians faced. However the evaluation suggests that Open Place is delivering a service which does directly impact on the needs of most Forgotten Australians. The 'not one size fits all' mantra is especially true in this context. The institutional and childhood experiences of all Forgotten

Australians are unique and the consequent impact on their adult lives is also unique and cumulative. The staff at Open Place demonstrated an understanding of this context and are developing expertise in addressing this. The findings demonstrated that Open Place has achieved the outcomes it sought in those areas which can be measured.

Chapter 9: Conclusion#

The evaluation sought to address the following:

- The program's capacity to meet the identified needs of Forgotten Australians
- Engage in the development of an effective service for Forgotten Australians that meets their needs
- Develop greater knowledge of the impact of institutional care on Forgotten Australians
- Identify appropriate interventions to assist Forgotten Australians.

The findings have demonstrated that Open Place does have capacity to meet the identified needs of Forgotten Australians and is noted by stakeholders to be achieving this. The implementation of the program as an effective service has been achieved. The latter two areas identified for the evaluation explored whether knowledge development was occurring, and if it was possible to identify appropriate interventions. These are continuing tasks for Open Place.

The evaluation highlights that the continuous development of knowledge and its dissemination has the potential to be of great value to Forgotten Australians and will add to knowledge nationally and internationally to assist people who have been severely impacted by systemic abuses of the past. The following recommendations have been developed based on the evaluation's findings.

Recommendations

The recommendations are that:

- Open Place continues to respond to the diverse needs of Forgotten Australians through the ongoing provision of a diverse range of services to Forgotten Australians.
 - *The evaluation has highlighted the diversity of needs experienced by Forgotten Australians. The degree of satisfaction with the services was associated with Forgotten Australians' expectations and needs. Services need to be delivered in a way that recognises this diversity.*
- Open Place further examines its service response and explores whether there needs to be priority service for the most disadvantaged Forgotten Australians.

- *All Forgotten Australians are likely to have experienced disadvantage and trauma. However, for some this has impacted on their health and daily living to a greater degree than others. It is suggested that Open Place should consider if it continues to try to meet the needs of all Forgotten Australians or focuses on the most disadvantaged.*
- Open Place continues to promote the marketing of the program to ensure that as many Forgotten Australians as possible know about the service and their eligibility.
 - *It is difficult to ascertain if Open Place has been able to reach all Forgotten Australians. However, it is important that the marketing of the service continues so that those who might wish to use the service in the future are aware of the service.*
- Open Place reviews its engagement with the families of Forgotten Australians based on the knowledge obtained of the impact of Forgotten Australians' experiences in institutions on their families.
 - *Open Place is in a unique situation to deepen and expand understanding of the impact of trauma from institutional care experience of Forgotten Australians on the Forgotten Australians and their families.*
- Open Place again explores the engagement of Forgotten Australians in the governance and management of the program.
 - *Open Place has experienced a number of challenges to developing positive working relationships with Forgotten Australians and bodies representing groups of Forgotten Australians. Open Place is well situated to utilise this knowledge and work with Forgotten Australians to empower them. One such strategy can be to assist them become be more engaged in the program's governance.*
- Open Place utilises its knowledge to provide ongoing training to external providers and other health and community sector staff in relation to best practice engagement with Forgotten Australians.

- *Open Place has already commenced this work. The findings of the evaluation highlight that Forgotten Australians form only a small percentage of external providers' caseloads. Open Place has a great deal of knowledge to share to assist these external services provide the best service possible to Forgotten Australians.*
- Open Place utilises its position in the service sector to build a network of providers in the health and welfare sectors who service Forgotten Australians to facilitate greater understanding of the needs of Forgotten Australians.
 - *Forgotten Australians utilise a breadth of services and it is highly likely that for many their unique needs arising from their institutional experiences are not recognised. It would assist Forgotten Australians if there was a supportive network to ensure they receive the services they require.*
-
- Open Place utilises knowledge it has gleaned from the provision of services, to partner with Forgotten Australians to advocate to State and Federal Governments for increased and expeditious access to other service systems such as housing and employment to support the most vulnerable Forgotten Australians.
 - *Open Place has developed evidence regarding the needs of Forgotten Australians in relation to a broad spectrum of services. To partner with Forgotten Australians to ensure the sectors are aware of the special needs of this group is an important role for Open Place.*
- Open Place continues to provide support for the ongoing provision and expansion of social support groups as they provide social connectedness which is missing in the lives of many Forgotten Australians.
 - *The evaluation identified the importance of support groups for Forgotten Australians. However, it was also clear that many groups required assistance to be sustainable and run effectively. Open Place has demonstrated its ability to assist these groups and this important role should continue.*

- As one of the few services for Forgotten Australians to evaluate their programs, Open Place needs to ensure that it maintains sound data collection systems to facilitate continuous evaluation of the service and contribution of knowledge to assist Forgotten Australians.
 - *This is the only program for Forgotten Australians which has evaluated its work so far. To contribute to the ongoing understanding of the needs of Forgotten Australians, Open Place can make a strong contribution to assisting other services conduct sensitive and effective programs. To do this, Open Place needs to ensure that it has sound ongoing data collection and data management systems.*

References

- ACT Government. (2004). ACT mental health strategy and action plan. Retrieved November, 2013, from <http://health.act.gov.au/c/health?a=dlpubpoldoc&document=816>
- Care Leavers' Association U.K. (2013). CLEARmark Framework Handbook. Retrieved November, 2013, from <http://www.careleavers.com/clearmark/documents>
- Care Leavers Australia Network. (2008). A terrible way to grow up: The experience of institutional care and its outcomes for care leavers in Australia. Retrieved May, 2013, from http://www.clan.org.au/images/CLAN_Survey_Results.pdf
- Carr, A. (2009). The psychological adjustment of adult survivors of institutional abuse in Ireland Report submitted to the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse. Retrieved October, 2013, from <http://www.childabusecommission.com/rpt/05-03A.php>
- Carr, A., Flanagan, E., Dooley, B., Fitzpatrick, M., Flanagan-Howard, R., Shevlin, M. & Egan, J. (2009). Profiles of Irish survivors of institutional abuse with different adult attachment styles. *Attachment & human development*, 11(2), 183-201.
- Clarke, A. (2010, 2009). *E-learning and social inclusion*. Paper presented at the Making IT Personal: e-learning@greenwich/conference, Greenwich, U.K.
- Cohen, G. D., Perlstein, S., Chapline, J., Kelly, J., Firth, K. M., & Simmens, S. (2006). The impact of professionally conducted cultural programs on the physical health, mental health, and social functioning of older adults. *The Gerontologist*, 46(6), 726-734.
- Commonwealth of Australia. (2013). *Veteran mental health strategy: A ten year framework 2013 – 2023*. Canberra: Department of Veterans' Affairs.
- Costello, L., Thomson, M., & Jones, K. (2013). Mental health and homelessness: Final report. Retrieved November, 2013, from <http://nswmentalhealthcommission.com.au/assets/File/Final%20Report%20-%20AHURI%20-%20Mental%20Health%20and%20Homelessness.pdf>
- Council of Australian Governments. (2012). *The Roadmap for National Mental Health Reform 2012–2022*. Retrieved November, 2013, from <http://www.coag.gov.au/node/482>
- Cullen, T. A., & Cobb, I. C. (2011). Computer literacy needs in a traditional library literacy program: Results of a needs analysis. *TechTrends*, 55(6), 25-32.
- Department of Human Services. (2009). Because mental health matters. Retrieved November, 2013, from http://www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth/reform/documents/mhs_web_summary.pdf
- Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The Satisfaction with Life scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 49, 71-75.
- Duff, C. (2011). Networks, resources and agencies: On the character and production of enabling places. *Health and Place*, 17(1), 149-156.

- Duff, C. (2012). Exploring the role of 'enabling places' in promoting recovery from mental illness: A qualitative test of a relational model. *Health & Place, 18*(6), 1388-1395.
- Ebbels, J. (2011). The experiences of women forgotten Australians and care leavers. Retrieved October, 2013, from <http://www.clan.org.au/images/Forgotten+Australians+Literature+Review.pdf>
- Eysenbach, G. (2005). Design and evaluation of consumer health information web sites. In D. Lewis, G. Eysenbach, R. Kukafka, P. Z. Stavri & H. B. Jimison (Eds.). *Consumer health informatics: Informing consumers and improving health care* (pp. 34-60). New York: Springer.
- Ezell, M. (2001). *Advocacy in the human services*. California, USA: Brooks/Cole Social Work.
- Fallot, R. D. & Harris, M. (2009). Creating cultures of trauma-informed care (CCTIC): A self-assessment and planning protocol. Washington D.C., U.S.A: Community Connections.
- Find & Connect Web Resource Project for the Commonwealth of Australia. (2011). Find & Connect Support Service Western Australia: Lanterns. Retrieved November, 2013, from <http://www.findandconnect.gov.au/contact/western-australia/>
- Fisher, K. J. & Li, F. (2004). A community-based walking trial to improve neighborhood quality of life in older adults: a multilevel analysis. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine, 28*(3), 186-194.
- Forgotten Australians Coming Together Inc. (2013). Tuart Place Strategic Plan 2013 – 2015. from <http://www.tuartplace.org/index.php/strategic-plan>
- Horrocks, C. & Goddard, J. (2006). Adults who grew up in care: Constructing the self and accessing care files. *Child & Family Social Work, 11*(3), 264-272.
- Jones, E. D., Herrick, C. & York, R. F. (2004). An intergenerational group benefits both emotionally disturbed youth and older adults. *Issues in mental health nursing, 25*(8), 753-767.
- Kenny, P., Higgins, D., Soloff, C. & Sweid, R. (2012). Past adoption experiences: National research study on the service response to past adoption practices (Research Report No. 21). Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.
- Kezelman, C. A., & Stavropoulos, P. A. (2012). Practice guidelines for treatment of complex trauma and trauma informed care and service delivery. Retrieved March, 2014, from http://www.asca.org.au/Portals/2/ASCA_Guidelines_WEB_Final.pdf
- Mental Health Policy Unit for the Policy and Inter-Governmental Relations Division. (2010). *South Australia's Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy 2010 - 2015*. Adelaide, S.A.: Government of South Australia.
- MICAH Projects Inc. (2012). Lotus Place. Retrieved October, 2013, from <http://www.lotusplace.org.au/#/>
- Murray, S., & Humphreys, C. (2012). 'My life's been a total disaster but I feel privileged': Care-leavers' access to personal records and their implications for social work practice. *Child & Family Social Work*.

- O'Connor, I., Wilson, J., Setterlund, D. & Hughes, M. (2008). *Social work and human service practice* (5th ed.). N.S.W., Australia: Pearson Education Australia.
- O'Hara, A. & Weber, Z. (2011). *Skills for human service practice: Working with individuals, groups and communities* (2nd ed.). Victoria, Australia: Oxford University Press.
- Open Secret (2013). In Care Survivors Service Scotland. Retrieved October, 2013, from <http://www.incaresurvivors.org.uk/>
- Park, S. (2012). Dimensions of digital media literacy and the relationship with social exclusion. *Media International Australia*, 142, 87-100.
- Porcino, A. (2011). Summary of findings of consultations with Queensland Forgotten Australians (Vol. 1). Queensland: RPR Consulting.
- Raman, S., & Forbes, C. (2008). It's not too late to care. Report on the research into life outcomes for people brought up in institutional care in Victoria. *Monograph No. 17, Monograph Series 2008*. Retrieved August, 2013, from <http://www.cfecfw.asn.au/sites/www.cfecfw.asn.au/files/Monograph%2017%20It's%20Not%20Too%20Late%20to%20Care%20Web.pdf>
- Rapp, C. A., Saleebey, D. & Sullivan, W. P. (2006). The future of strengths-based social work. *Advances in Social Work: Special Issue on the Futures of Social Work*, 6, 79.
- Relationships Australia. (2012). Forgotten Australians - Wattle Place. Retrieved October, 2013, from <http://www.nsw.relationships.com.au/ourservices/services-library/fass.aspx>
- Routasalo, P. E., Tilvis, R. S., Kautiainen, H. & Pitkala, K. H. (2009). Effects of psychosocial group rehabilitation on social functioning, loneliness and well-being of lonely, older people: randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 65(2), 297-305.
- SACRO. (2012). SACRO Annual Review 2011-2012. Retrieved DEcember, 2013, from http://www.sacro.org.uk/sites/default/files/basic-page/file/sacroannualreview_2011-2012_0.pdf
- Sanders, R. (2012). Senate Inquiry -- Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices: Report of the Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry: Volumes 1-3 (2012). *Children Australia*, 37(2), 84.
- Schneider, R. L., & Lester, L. (2001). *Social work advocacy: A new framework for action*: Brooks/Cole Belmont, CA.
- Schreuer, N., & Weiss, P. L. T. (2012). Virtual Technologies and Empowerment of Users of Rehabilitation. In A. Kruger & T. Kuflik (Eds.), *Ubiquitous Display Environments* (pp. 213-228). Heidelberg, Berlin: Springer.
- Scottish Government. (2011). Time to be heard: A pilot forum. Retrieved September, 2013, from <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/344008/0114448.pdf>

- Scottish Government. (2013). Survivor Scotland: Best practice. Retrieved October, 2013, from <http://www.survivorscotland.org.uk/about-sexual-abuse/best-practice/>
- Swain, S., & Musgrove, N. (2012). We are the stories we tell about ourselves: Child welfare records and the construction of identity among Australians who, as children, experienced out-of-home 'care'. *Archives and Manuscripts*, 40(1), 4-14.
- Trevithick, P. (2012). *Social work skills and knowledge: A practice handbook* (3rd. ed.). Maidenhead, England: Open University Press.
- van den Haak, M., & van Hooijdonk, C. (2010). *Evaluating consumer health information websites: The importance of collecting observational, user-driven data*. Paper presented at the Professional Communication Conference (IPCC), 2010 IEEE International.
- van Deursen, A. J. A. M. (2012). Internet skill-related problems in accessing online health information. *International Journal of Medical Informatics*, 81(1), 61-72.
- van Deursen, A. J. A. M., & van Dijk, J. A. G. M. (2011). Internet skills and the digital divide. *New Media & Society*, 13(6), 893-911.
- Ware, J. E., Kosinski, M., & Keller, S. D. (1995). *SF-12: How to Score the SF-12 Physical and Mental Health Summary Scales* (2nd ed.). Boston: The Health Institute, New England Medical Center.
- Wilks, T. (2012). *Advocacy and social work practice*. Retrieved from <http://latrobe.ebilib.com.au/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=879700>
- Wolfson, P., Holloway, F. & Killaspy, H. (2009). Enabling recovery for people with complex mental health needs: A template for rehabilitaiton services. Retrieved November, 2013, from http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/pdf/fr_rs_1_forwebsite.pdf