




we  
believe  
you

*Reflections  
from the  
INSIDE Exhibition*



*The wattle has long represented the spirit of Australia.  
It symbolises our shared values of compassion and  
fairness. On 16 November 2009, Australia acknowledged  
and apologised to the Forgotten Australians and the Former  
Child Migrants for the wrongs and injustices of the past.*

we  
believe  
you

*Reflections  
from the  
INSIDE Exhibition*

**INSIDE**  
Life in Children's Homes  
and Institutions



**WE BELIEVE YOU:**  
*Reflections from the INSIDE Exhibition*  
*Inside: Life in Children's Homes and*  
*Institutions*

This booklet celebrates the fifth anniversary of the National Apology to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants that was provided by the Honourable Kevin Rudd, former Prime Minister, and supported by the Honourable Malcolm Turnbull, former Opposition Leader, on 16 November 2009.

**IN THIS APOLOGY KEVIN RUDD STATED:**

**We recognise the pain  
you have suffered.  
Pain so personal.  
So let us together as  
a nation, allow this  
Apology to begin  
healing this pain**

*(see full apology on page 7)*

The National Apology was the Australian Parliament's official recognition of the wrongs perpetrated on hundreds of thousands of children brought up in institutions and orphanages in the last century.

A number of constructive actions have flowed from the Apology. Many of these initiatives have arisen from the commitment of the former Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), the Honourable Jenny Macklin. One of these initiatives is the exhibition *Inside: Life in Children's Homes and Institutions\**. Developed by the National Museum of Australia, the purpose of the exhibition, which has been shown in several museums in Australia, is to tell the story of these children.

*Inside* shares the experiences of some of the half a million children who, over the course of the 20th century, spent time in Children's Homes and orphanages, training schools, reformatories and other 'care' institutions throughout Australia.

Of the 500,000 children in these institutions, the vast majority were what are now known as

the Forgotten Australians. About a tenth were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children. A smaller number, about 7000, were British and Maltese child migrants. Only a minority were orphans. Some children spent a relatively short time in these places, others spent their entire childhood 'inside'.

Although so many children were brought up in institutions, what happened to them there is largely unknown to the wider community. *Inside* presents these histories – for so long unspoken, unheard or disbelieved – in the words, voices and objects of the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants and all those who experienced institutional 'care' as children.

\* *Inside: Life in Children's Homes and Institutions* is a travelling exhibition developed and presented by the National Museum of Australia and supported by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.



Malcolm Turnbull, in his support of the National Apology stated:

**We believe you.** These simple words received a standing ovation from the audience in the Great Hall at Parliament House Canberra.

Despite the words of Malcolm Turnbull, for most Australians, this has been a story beyond belief. The 'care' these children received, at best, benign neglect, at worst, appalling physical and sexual abuse, happened in our neighbourhoods and in our communities, by organisations we trusted and in our lifetime. The exhibition exposes and illuminates this chapter in our lives; it brings home to us what hundreds of thousands of children endured in our state sanctioned 'care' systems.

**We now know what happened to these children.... how do we respond to these children, now adults?**

The *Inside* exhibition was displayed at Melbourne Museum from 29 August 2013 to 27 January 2014. Visitors were invited to record their reflections of the exhibition on a slip of paper and pin them to a board. During the life of the exhibition it became clear that the comments themselves were attracting much attention. The comments board was providing an opportunity for people to express regret, outrage, shock and sorrow; the comments were a community's collective recognition that a great wrong has been committed and that continuing attention to the needs of those who suffered is still required.

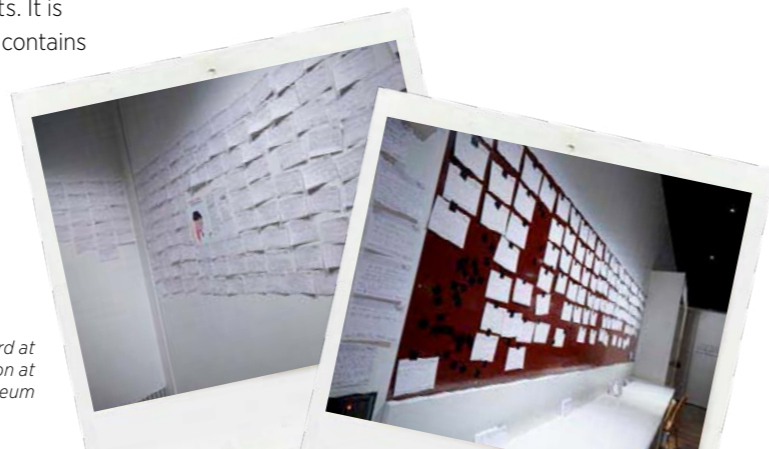
This booklet contains a sample of some of these comments. It is accompanied by a CD that contains over 2000 comments.

(Note: the CD can only be viewed on a computer.)

Comments were received from the general public, from those who identified themselves as having experience institutional 'care', from those with a relative or friend who experienced institutional 'care' and from children.

It is therefore fitting that, on this fifth anniversary of the National Apology, a community apology be received. We hope that the *Inside* exhibition, the CD of responses to the exhibition and this booklet itself will affirm the message:

**We believe you**



The comments board at the *Inside* exhibition at Melbourne Museum

## PRIME MINISTER MOTION OF APOLOGY TO THE FORGOTTEN AUSTRALIANS AND FORMER CHILD MIGRANTS 16 November 2009



*Today, the Government of Australia will move the following motion of apology in the Parliament of Australia.*

*We come together today to deal with an ugly chapter in our nation's history.*

*And we come together today to offer our nation's apology.*

*To say to you, the Forgotten Australians, and those who were sent to our shores as children without your consent, that we are sorry.*

*Sorry- that as children you were taken from your families and placed in institutions where so often you were abused.*

*Sorry- for the physical suffering, the emotional starvation and the cold absence of love, of tenderness, of care.*

*Sorry - for the tragedy of childhoods lost- childhoods spent instead in austere and authoritarian places, where names were replaced by numbers, spontaneous play by regimented routine, the joy of learning by the repetitive drudgery of menial work.*

*Sorry - for all these injustices to you as children, who were placed in our care.*

*As a nation, we must now reflect on those who did not receive proper care.*

*We look back with shame that many of these little ones who were entrusted to institutions and foster homes - instead, were abused physically, humiliated cruelly and violated sexually.*

*We look back with shame at how those with power were allowed to abuse those who had none.*

*And how then, as if this was not injury enough, you were left ill-prepared for life outside - left to fend for yourselves; often unable to read or write; to struggle alone with no friends and no family.*

*For these failures to offer proper care to the powerless, the voiceless and the most vulnerable, we are sorry.*

*We reflect too today on the families who were ripped apart, simply because they had fallen on hard times.*

**MOTION OF APOLOGY TO THE FORGOTTEN  
AUSTRALIANS AND FORMER CHILD MIGRANTS**

16 November 2009

(continued)



*Hard times brought about by illness, by death  
and by poverty.*

*Some simply left destitute when fathers,  
damaged by war, could no longer cope.*

*Again we say sorry for the extended families  
you never knew.*

*We acknowledge the particular pain of children  
shipped to Australia as child migrants – robbed  
of your families, robbed of your homeland,  
regarded not as innocent children but regarded  
instead as a source of child labour.*

*To those of you who were told you were orphans,  
brought here without your parents' knowledge or  
consent, we acknowledge the lies you were told,  
the lies told to you mothers and fathers, and the  
pain these lies have caused for a lifetime.*

*To those of you separated on the dockside  
from your brothers and sisters; taken alone and  
unprotected to the most remote parts of a foreign  
land – we acknowledge today the laws of our  
nation failed you.*

*And for this we are deeply sorry.*

*We think also today of all the families of these  
Forgotten Australians and former child migrants  
who are still grieving, families who were never  
reunited, families who were never reconciled,  
families who were lost to one another forever.*

*We reflect too on the burden that is still carried  
by your own children, your grandchildren, your  
husbands, your wives, your partners and your  
friends – and we thank them for the faith, the love  
and the depth of commitment that has helped see  
you through the valley of tears that was not of  
your making.*

*And we reflect with you as well, in sad  
remembrance, on those who simply could not cope  
and who took their own lives in absolute despair.*

*We recognise the pain you have suffered.*

*Pain so personal.*

*Pain so profoundly disabling.*

*So, let us therefore, together as a nation, allow this apology  
to begin healing this pain.*

*Healing the pain felt by so many of the half a million of  
our fellow Australians and those who as children were  
in our care.*

*And let us also resolve this day, that this national apology  
becomes a turning point in our nation's story.*

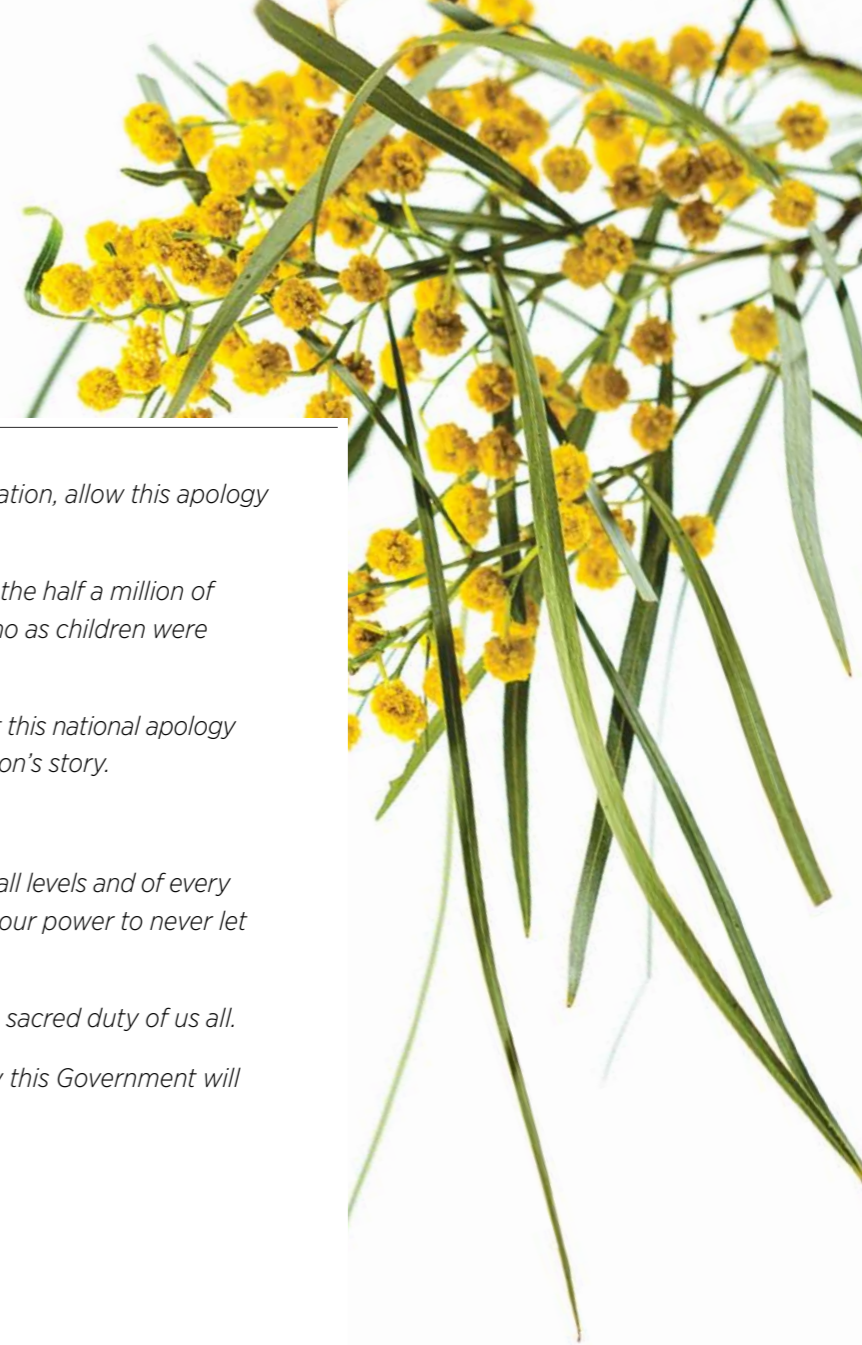
*A turning point for shattered lives.*

*A turning point for Governments at all levels and of every  
political colour and hue, to do all in our power to never let  
this happen again.*

*For the protection of children is the sacred duty of us all.*

*This is the motion that later this day this Government will  
commend to the House.*

**The Hon Kevin Rudd MP  
Prime Minister**

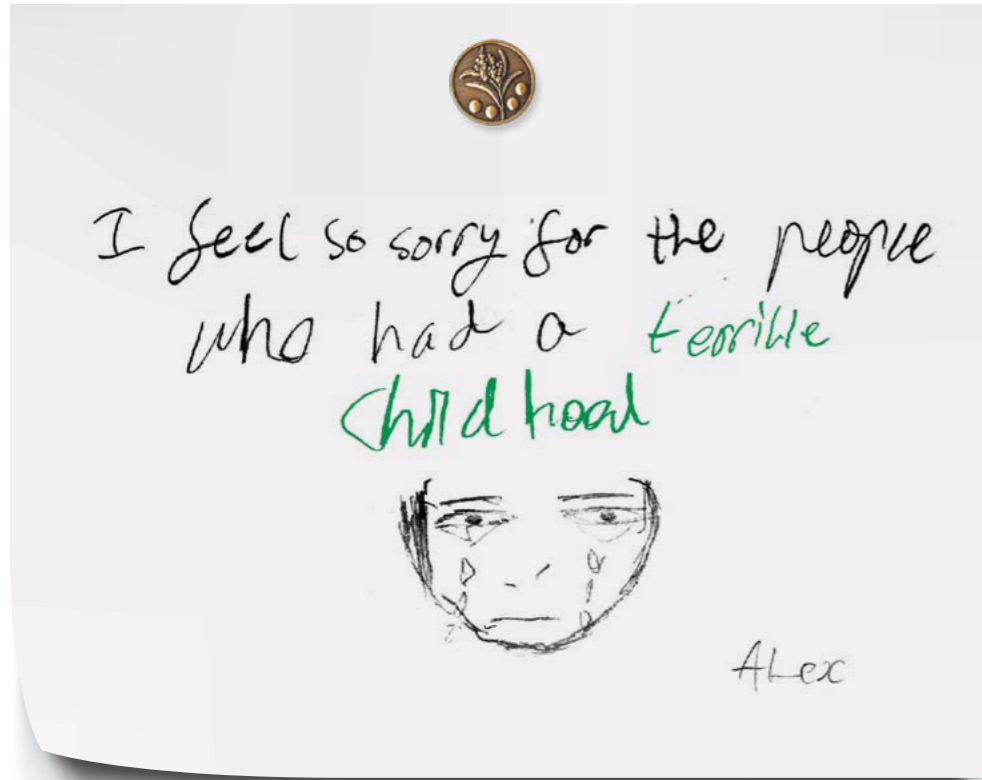


# Childhood



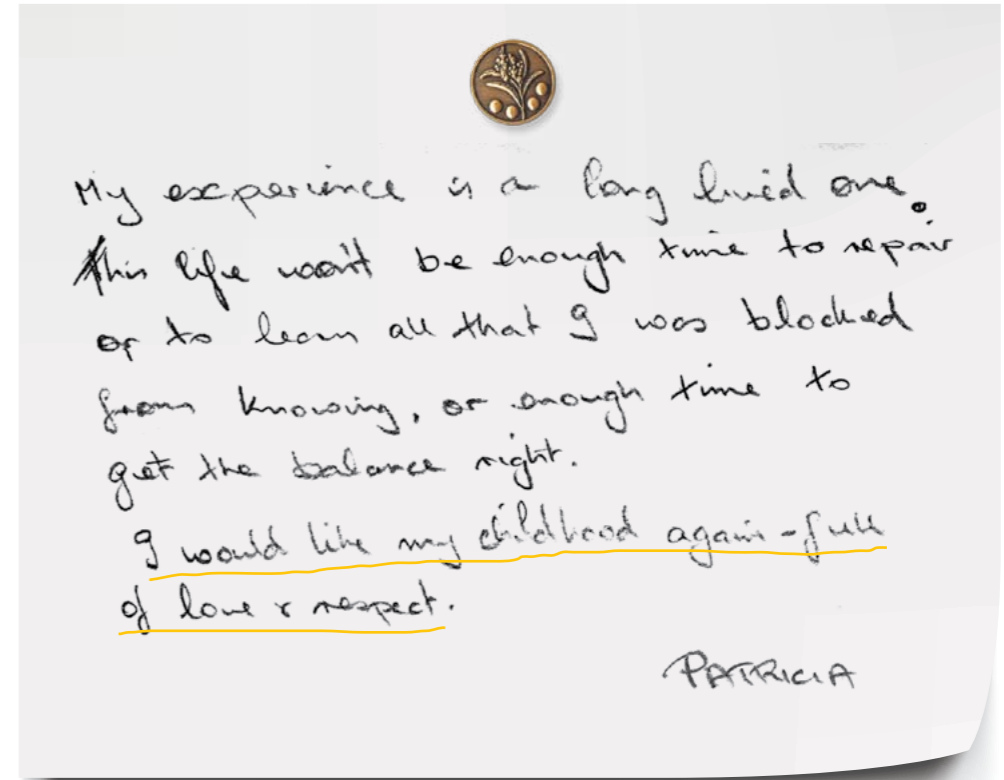
“If you hurt a child, a harmed adult will often result”

ANDREW MURRAY



*'I feel so sorry for the people who had a terrible childhood'.*

- ALEX, Age 21



*'My experience is a long lived one. This life won't be enough to repair or to learn all that I was blocked from knowing, or enough time to get the balance right.'*

*I would like my childhood again - full of love and respect'.*

- PATRICIA, Age 62



night bed time prayer

NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO  
SLEEP. I PRAY THE LORD  
MY SOUL TO KEEP

(We used to pray-hoping someone was listening)

Mary

*'Night time prayer.'*

*Now I lay me down to sleep I pray to the Lord my soul to keep.  
(We used to pray hoping someone was listening).'*

- MARY, Age 60



What did they do to  
My Mum and Grandpar?

Siahna

*'What did they do to my mum and grandpar?'*

- SIAHNA, Age 12



courage

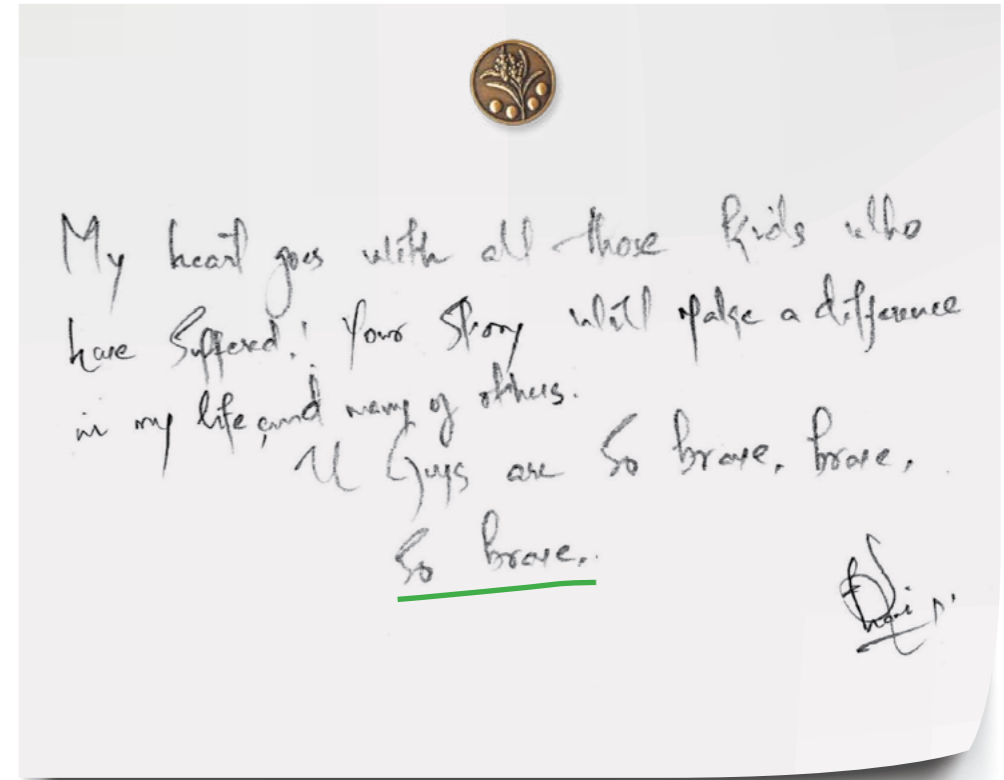
“Healing takes courage, and we all have courage, even if we have to dig a little to find it.”

**TORI AMOS**



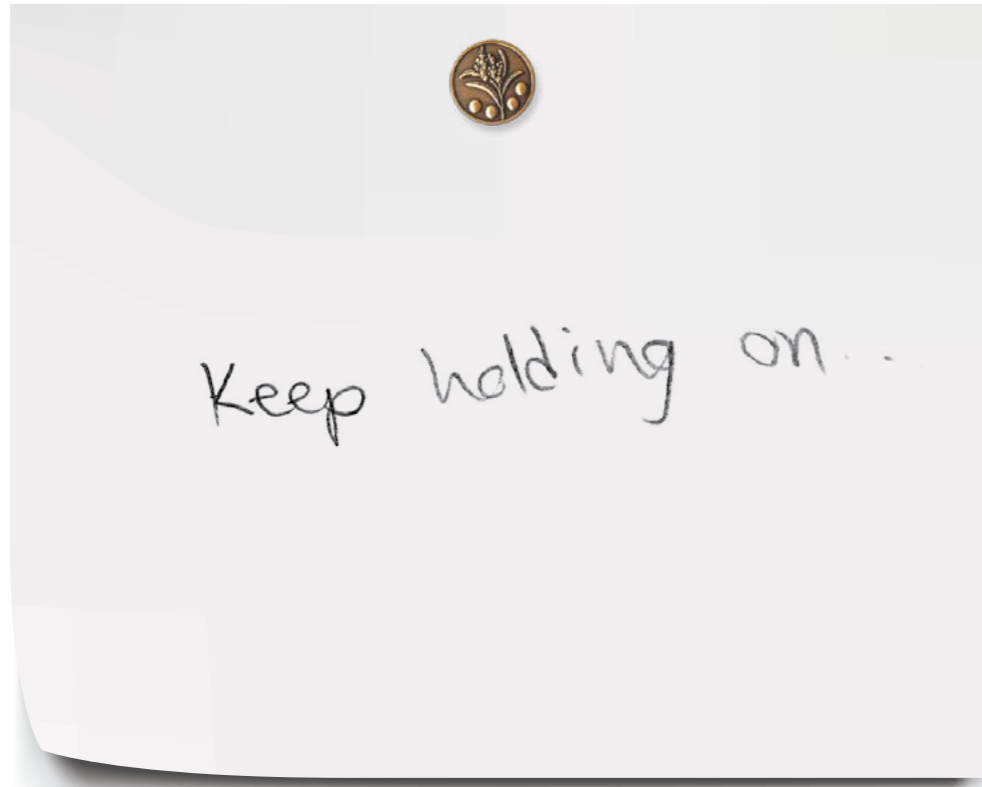
My Mum!  
My inspiration!  
I love you Mum

- ANON



My heart goes with all those kids who have suffered. Your story will make a difference in my life and many others. U guys are so brave BRAVE.  
So brave.

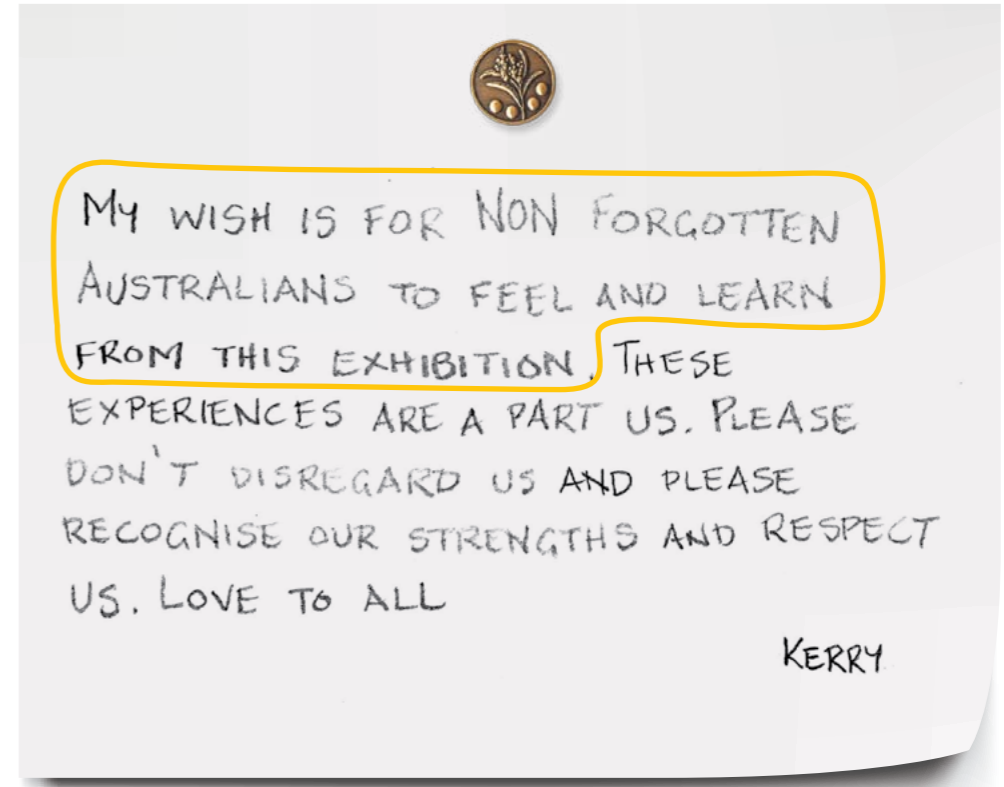
- SHARNI, Age 24



Keep holding on...

*'Keep holding on.'*

- ANON



My wish is for Non Forgotten  
Australians to feel and learn  
from this exhibition. These  
experiences are a part of us. Please  
don't disregard us and please  
recognise our strengths and respect  
us. Love to all

KERRY

*'My wish is for Non Forgotten Australians to feel and learn from this exhibition. These experiences are a part of us. Please don't disregard us and please recognise our strengths and respect us. Love to all.'*

- KERRY, Age 50

“Only in the darkness  
can we see the stars.”

MARTIN LUTHER KING



hope



When you see, choose  
I see pain.  
Some people choose not to see,  
but if you see, even the things  
you can't change, you can help.  
Do what you can. In any situation.

Even if it's just a smile

Sherrin ☺

*'When you see, choose. I see pain.'*

*Some people choose not to see, but if you see even the things  
you can't change you can help. Do what you can, in any  
situation. Even if it's just a smile.'*

- SHERRIN, Age 18

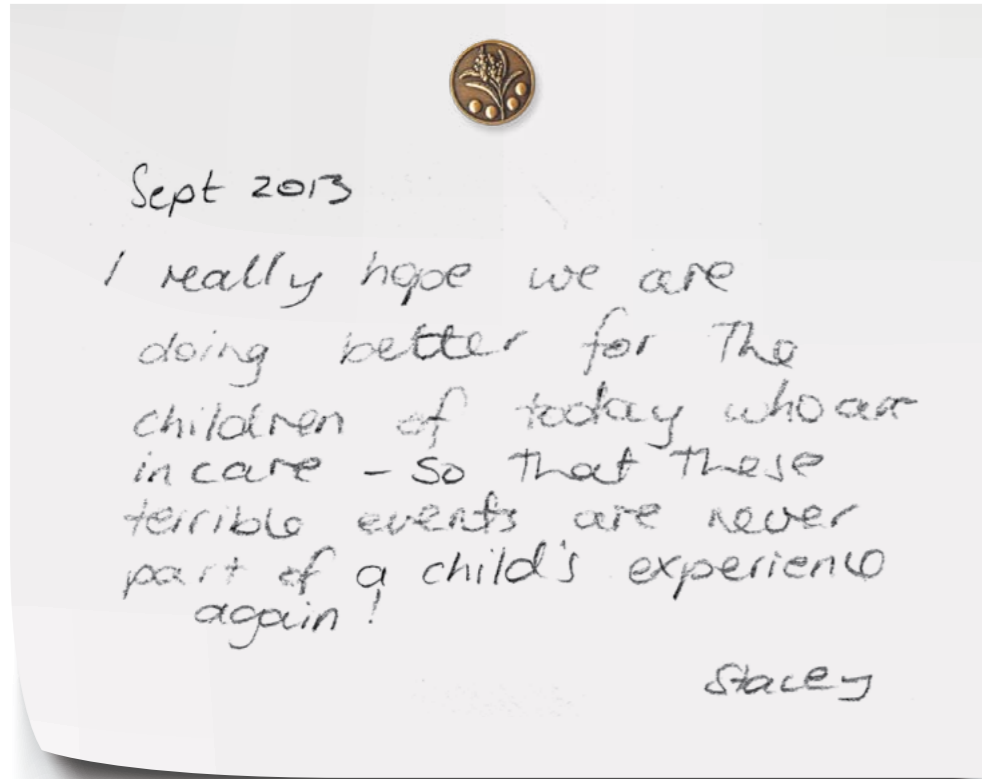


Your stories will never be  
forgotten.

Ali

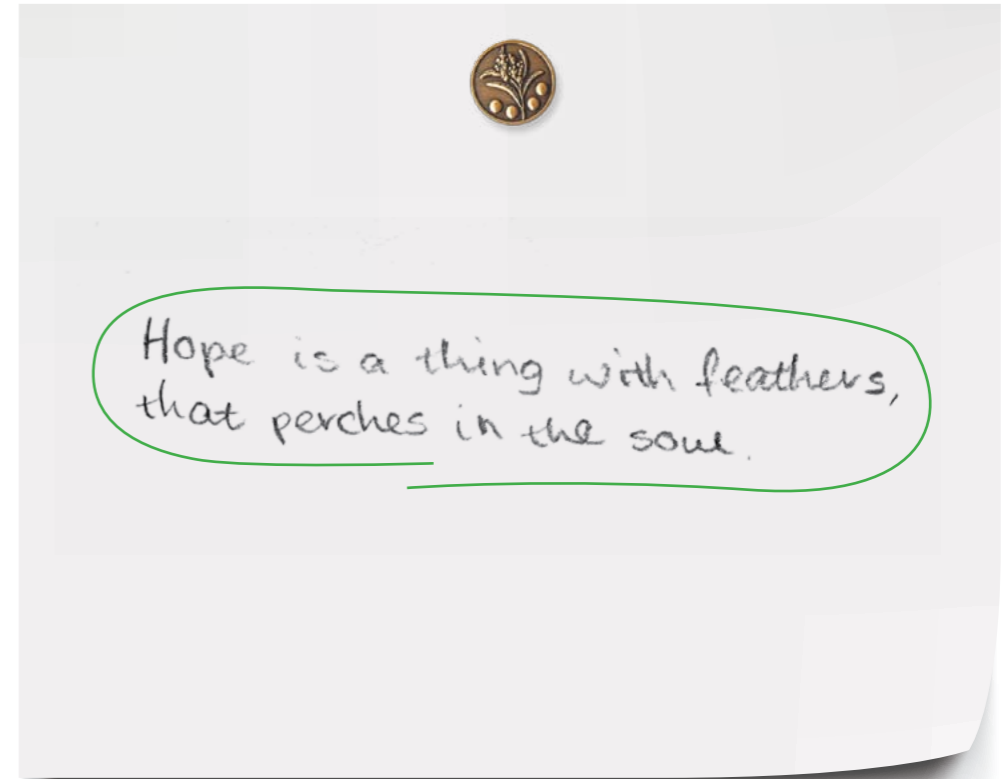
*'Your stories will never be forgotten.'*

- ALI, Age 19



*'I really hope we are doing better for the children of today who are in care - so that these terrible events are never part of a child's experience again!'*

- STACEY, Age 33




*'Hope is a thing with feathers that perches in the soul.'*

- ANON

“Justice will not be served  
until those who are unaffected  
are as outraged as those who are”

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN






NAZI war criminals faced the  
Nuremberg Trials for crimes  
against humanity.  
Everyone of these institutions  
+ the criminals who ran them need  
judgement.  
Every cent these 'fat' institutions  
have need to be given to the victims  
- no money is enough of course  
- had our children

Susanne

'NAZI war criminals faced the Nuremberg trials for crimes against humanity.  
Everyone of these institutions and the criminals who ran them need judgement.  
Every cent of the "fat" institutions have, need to be given to the victims -  
no money is enough of course'.

- SUSANNE



I just can't believe they would  
do this to children it's  
horrible!!

Shane

'I can't believe they would do this to children. It's horrible'.

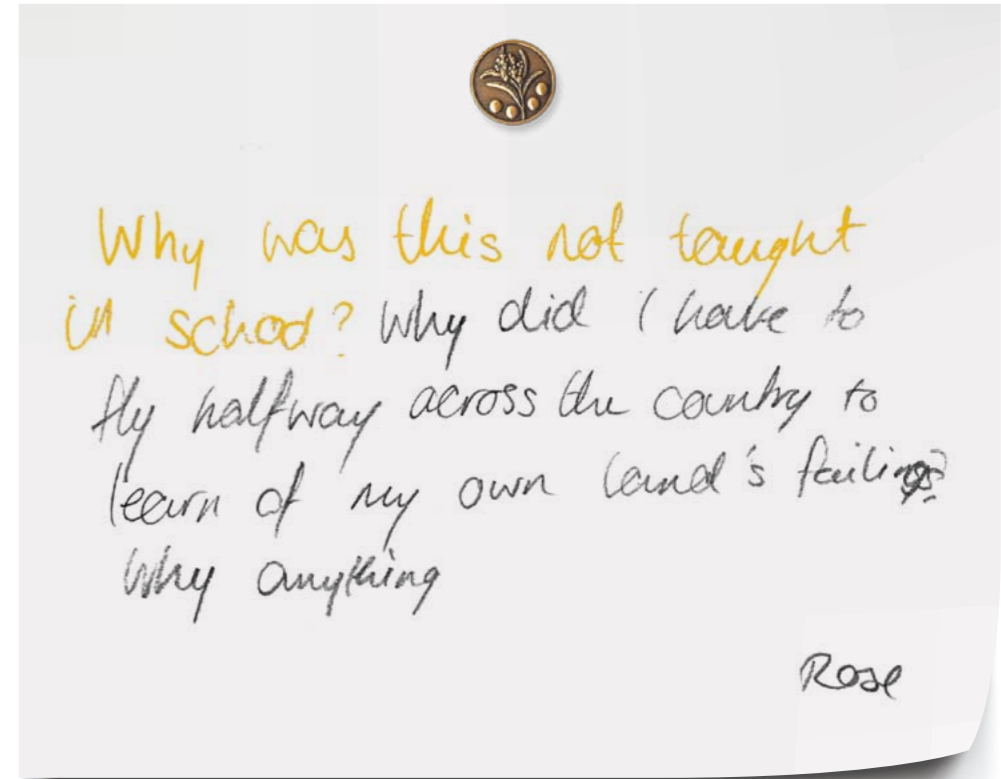
- SHANE, Age 14





*'Very touching and devastating stories. Bless all who were treated badly. Justice will be served. Lots of love.'*

- FEENZ, Age 21



*'Why was this not taught in school? Why did I have to travel fly half way across the country to learn of my country's failings?'*

- ROSE, Age 18

# THE FIGHT FOR JUSTICE CONTINUES...



## MILESTONES ON THE FORGOTTEN AUSTRALIAN JOURNEY:

1999

Forde Inquiry, Queensland, recommends a National Inquiry into institutional care of children

Apology from Queensland Parliament. Other States follow (Victoria in 2006)

2004

Senate report on children who experienced institutional or out of home care as children completed. Report recommends a national redress scheme and a Royal Commission

Memorials to Forgotten Australians begin to be established (Queensland). Victoria follows in 2006

2010

INSIDE exhibition opens in Canberra (National Museum)

Open Place established with funding from DHS

2009

National Apology

2012

Oral history Project completed (National Library of Australia)

Find and Connect web resource and support service commences

2013

Betrayal of Trust report released by Victorian Government.

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Sexual Abuse commences

THE WAIT FOR REDRESS CONTINUES

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# OPEN PLACE

*Support Service for Forgotten Australians*

## **OPEN PLACE**

Suite 1 / 8 Bromham Place  
Richmond, Victoria 3121

Find and Connect  
Free Call – 1800 16 11 09  
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