



This November, the Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA) is inviting us to observe the very first national **Forgotten Australians Awareness Week**. Each year, Forgotten Australians Awareness Week will be held in the week of the 16 November, the anniversary of the 2009 Federal Apology to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants.

This year it will run from 15 – 23 November 2026. The theme for this inaugural year is **“Ensuring Forgotten Australians are Remembered”**.

Forgotten Australians Awareness Week (FAAW) aims to improve awareness, recognition and understanding of Forgotten Australians.

Forgotten Australians are adults who, as children, were placed in Australian foster homes, children’s homes, orphanages, or similar institutions in the period before 1990. The most common reasons for this happening were neglect, abuse, destitution and poverty, being orphaned or abandoned, children deemed in “moral danger” or disability and poor health.

These should have been places of safety and care for vulnerable children, but instead were places of severe and widespread exploitation, neglect, and abuse.

Despite being close to half a million in number, they remain largely unknown and unseen by the wider Australian community.

Forgotten Australians live with ongoing impacts as a result of the trauma they experienced, due to society’s failure to care for them as children. This has been highlighted and acknowledged in a Senate Inquiry and State and National apologies to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants, yet they are at risk of being forgotten again.

The term “Forgotten Australians” was adopted by the Government for the Senate Inquiry and has been used officially since then. Other terms used by the community themselves include “Care Leavers” and “State Wards”. Many people won’t use any identifier from that time in their lives and don’t like to disclose that part of their history.

Forgotten Australians Awareness Week was created by Forgotten Australians because they don’t feel heard or understood. Day after day they are confronted with the insult of people being unaware of who they are and what they went through, despite their stories being a significant part of Australia’s history. They and their experiences matter!

Daryl, a Forgotten Australian, has championed the idea of a dedicated week for a number of years and was integral to its eventual establishment.

"As a Forgotten Australian and Deputy Chair of the Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA) I am passionate about Forgotten Australians being recognised

for what they have been through. Forgotten Australians were Physically, Mentally and Sexually abused whilst in the so-called care of the Government and/or religious orders. There was no hygiene or dental care, and under garments were nonexistent. Toothbrushes and toothpaste did not exist, causing serious dental problems. As for Education, it really did not exist. At the age of 14 years, while still children, we were sent back into society where we had to fend for ourselves. For some that meant breaking the law, in order to survive. Forgotten Australians explaining their illnesses to doctors is not only traumatising, it is humiliating. The same could be said when anyone of authority who approached them, be it a Policeman, Council employee, basically anyone in uniform. I, as a Forgotten Australian, am not asking for money or pity. What I am asking for is recognition that nearly 500,000 non-indigenous children went through this trauma and it's Bloody difficult for a Forgotten Australian to blend into society."

Despite that, because of their bravery in talking about their experiences, and fighting for recognition and changes, Forgotten Australians have significantly contributed to important changes in Australia's child protection and welfare systems. They continue to be strong advocates for themselves and are passionate that children today don't go through what they went through. They are the reason [Wattle Place](#) and similar services around the country exist!

Greater awareness and understanding could also improve interactions for Forgotten Australians with GPs, Government departments, the health system, the aged care system and community services. The impacts of the trauma they live with often create barriers in these environments.

These common interactions can be re-traumatising for people with complex trauma when the service is not trained or prepared to accommodate their needs. Better understanding about Forgotten Australians and the ongoing impacts they live with, will enable services to create spaces where Forgotten Australians feel acknowledged and safe.

That is why we are helping AFA to spread the word about Forgotten Australians Awareness Week, and we are asking you to help too. Between 15 and 23 November, we're asking you to share information about Forgotten Australians Awareness Week, find out something new about Forgotten Australians, and wear white to show your support.

For more information, go to the Alliance for Forgotten Australians website at www.forgottenaustralians.org.au