

The Forgotten Australians



What do they tell us about social life in Australia in the twentieth century?

A DEPTH STUDY

On 16 November 2009 the Prime Minister made a national apology.

No, not to the 'Stolen Generations' — that was made in February 2008. This Apology was to those children who were placed in orphanages, Children's Homes, foster care and other forms of out-of-home 'care' during the twentieth century.

It is estimated that over 500,000 children spent time in such places, and as you will discover in this unit of work, the treatment they received has often affected their whole lives. The legacy of their experiences in 'care' continues to impact on following generations. Today they are called the 'Forgotten Australians' and 'Former Child Migrants' (children brought out to Australia under child migration schemes).

While you may have heard of the Stolen Generations – the removal of Aboriginal children from their parents – you may not know anything about the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants. It is only recently that the history of these children (a number of whom were also Aboriginal children), and the experiences they endured, is being written and discussed. In November 2011 the National Museum of Australia will add to this 'new history' when it opens an exhibition about life in Children's Homes.

The National Museum of Australia and Ryebuck Media acknowledge the assistance of Care Leavers Australia Network (CLAN) for many of the photographs and much of the information used in this unit. We are also grateful to the Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA) for their support.

IMPORTANT NOTE TO TEACHERS

Due of the theme and the nature of some of the material in this unit, the authors recommend that it should be used by students in Year 10 and older.

Teachers are advised that there are some confronting and disturbing stories about, and images of, the experiences of some people in this unit. We understand that there may be students in your classroom who for various reasons may be affected by these stories and images.

We therefore strongly advise that teachers read through the unit before using it with their students and take any necessary steps to ensure that it does not have any unintended harmful effects.

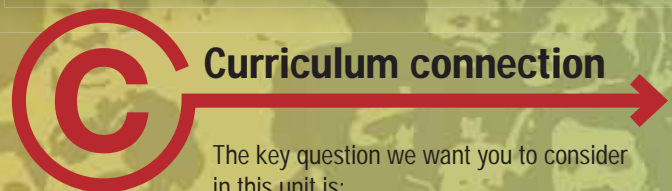
Much of the evidence contained in this unit comes from two Commonwealth Parliament Inquiries: the 2004 Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care (*Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children*) and the earlier 2001 Senate Inquiry into child migration (*Lost Innocents: Righting the Record – Report on child migration*).

The unit concerns those people to whom the Australian Government apologised on 16 November 2009.

Artwork created by Ivy Williams, resident of Parramatta Girls' Home, 1947–50



Photo: courtesy CLAN and Ivy Catchell



The key question we want you to consider in this unit is:

What does a study of these narratives tell us about society, and especially about aspects of childhood for poor and disadvantaged children in Australia in the twentieth century?

The unit could be used in a study of an aspect of Australia's social history in the twentieth century. Alternatively, it could also be used as an exploration of social justice issues in the SOSE classroom.

Forming ideas

Look at the collection of images associated with the life and experiences of children in orphanages, Homes and other institutions on the next three pages.

- [1] Under each photograph write a few words to describe what you see, or what you think the main story or 'message' of each photo seems to be.
- [2] Under each also list a few questions that you might ask to find out more about that experience. One example has been started for you.

Photo: Michael O'Donoghue



A Child Migrant Mike O'Donoghue at Clontarf Boys Town Christian Brothers Home, WA, ca 1955

Information/message:

Looks happy, healthy

Some questions I would like to ask to investigate this photo further are:

How did you feel?

Were you really happy like this?

What was it like being in the Home?

Photo: National Archives of Australia



C Children picking apples in the apple orchard at Tresca Children's Home for child migrants, Exeter, Tasmania, 1958

Information/message:

Some questions I would like to ask to investigate this photo further are:

- [3] Then, when you have looked at all 16 photographs, write a summary statement about what image of life for those children this collection of images gives you.

The image I gain from these photos of life for children in care is:

Photo: State Library of Western Australia



B Child migrants 1st XVIII football team, St Vincent's Boys Home, WA, 1950

Information/message:

Some questions I would like to ask to investigate this photo further are:

Photo: National Archives of Australia



D 530 children under the age of 14 arrive at Port Melbourne aboard the *Fairsea* from the UK, 1956

Information/message:

Some questions I would like to ask to investigate this photo further are:



E Soft toy owned by Jeanette Blick, resident of Orana Methodist Home for Children, Burwood, Victoria, ca 1962

Information/message:

Some questions I would like to ask to investigate this photo further are:



F Dormitory bed-making at Good Shepherd Girls Home, Ashfield, NSW, 1963

Information/message:

Some questions I would like to ask to investigate this photo further are:



G Boys standing beside covered truck, Kilmany Park Boys Home, Sale, Victoria, ca 1955

Information/message:

Some questions I would like to ask to investigate this photo further are:

H Playing 'Monopoly' at Good Shepherd Girls Home, Ashfield, NSW, 1963



Information/message:

Some questions I would like to ask to investigate this photo further are:



I Small children waiting to be immunized at Nudgee Orphanage, Brisbane, Queensland, ca 1928

Information/message:

Some questions I would like to ask to investigate this photo further are:

J Blackboard teaching at Dalwood Home, Seaforth, NSW, 1929



Information/message:

Some questions I would like to ask to investigate this photo further are:



K Jim Fraser entertaining children at Goulburn Boys Home, NSW, 1956

Information/message:

Some questions I would like to ask to investigate this photo further are:



L School children at Burnside Homes, North Parramatta, NSW, 1925

Information/message:

Some questions I would like to ask to investigate this photo further are:



M One day's food – Sydney City Mission.

Information/message:

Some questions I would like to ask to investigate this photo further are:



N Sign from the Methodist Babies Home, Victoria, ca 1929-1975

Information/message:

Some questions I would like to ask to investigate this photo further are:

O Sign held up by Wilma Robb at the National Apology to the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants 2009



Information/message:

Some questions I would like to ask to investigate this photo further are:



P Gardening at Hay Institution for Girls, NSW, ca 1961-1974

Information/message:

Some questions I would like to ask to investigate this photo further are:

Summarising ideas

The previous activity will have given you some ideas about childhood in Australia for those people who were sent to institutions.

- 1 Look at the table below. Summarise briefly what you expect to find out, or what your image of childhood is, for each of the aspects of childhood listed in the table. Summarise your ideas in column B. One example has been done to help you.

After you have looked at evidence about each of these aspects later in this unit you will be asked to complete column C, but just leave it blank for the moment.

EXPERIENCE OF CHILDHOOD: Summary table

A Aspect of childhood	B What do you expect is the children's main experience of this aspect of life?	C From the evidence presented what was the experience of many of the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants?
Food and shelter		
Clothing and possessions		
Health and hygiene		
Identity and childhood	<i>Children were able to develop their identity and sense of being an individual, through a happy childhood.</i>	
Work		
Education		
Love and affection		
Family		
Punishment and discipline		
Safety and protection		

- 2 Look back at the set of 16 images. Identify which theme or themes each seems to be relevant to.
- 3 Start making notes in the table based on these images.

Testing ideas and images

Your task now is to look at evidence to test the images or ideas you have developed about life for these children.

The evidence has been taken from two Commonwealth Parliament Senate reports. The first, in 2001, was called *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record – Report on child migration*, and the second, in 2004, *Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children*. The Inquiries asked for Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants to provide information about their experiences. This may have meant that those with the strongest memories or those with the worst experiences were heard.

The evidence that you will explore comes from a variety of Homes and institutions. These are usually identified in both the *Lost Innocents* and *Forgotten Australians* reports, but we have not identified them in the extracts we have used. The aim is to help you understand the general experience of the children involved, not to focus on any group or organisation.

The Inquiry into child migration received ninety nine confidential submissions, and one hundred and fifty three public submissions. The Inquiry into children in institutional care received six hundred and fourteen submissions, of which four hundred and forty were public. These submissions covered many institutions in all states.

To complete this task you need to:

- > work in small groups, with each group looking at one of the sets of evidence on pages 7-16
- > use this evidence to complete column C of the table on page 5
- > report to the whole class on your findings for the particular aspect you have focused on.

The following background information will help you understand the context for the evidence you are about to read and discuss.

Background briefing

Aspect	Explanation
Who are the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants?	They are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian children placed in institutions or out-of-home care ('Forgotten Australians'), and • British and Maltese child migrants from the 1920s to the 1970s ('Lost Innocents'). This unit looks at the experience of life in Children's Homes for both these groups.
Where did they live?	In institutions called Homes, orphanages, reformatories and mental institutions, foster homes and 'out of care' arrangements.
Who ran these places?	All state governments and many religious orders, charitable and welfare groups.
How many were there?	An estimated more than 500,000 children over the twentieth century.
In what period?	Twentieth century.
Why were they in care?	For a variety of reasons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some were placed by their parent/s because the parent/s could not provide for them. Sometimes these parents had to work and used the Home as a form of child care. If they could, they paid maintenance to those running the institution. • Other reasons included illness, death, desertion, divorce, drunkenness and domestic violence at a time when there was little support for women or men to raise their families. Fathers were considered unsuitable to raise children on their own. • Unmarried women were under strong social pressures to give up their children. • Many children were taken to Homes simply by reason of poverty in an era of almost no community or government support for families in crisis or need. Many children had fathers and mothers who returned traumatised from war service. • Some were removed from their parents and made state wards and/or placed in state care, because the state considered their parents unfit for the children at risk. • Some children were taken into state care due to a short-term crisis and many parents then discovered that they could not get their children back. • Many children were made wards of the state after being charged with being uncontrollable, neglected or in moral danger, not because they had done anything wrong, but because of the circumstances in which they found themselves.

Adapted from *Forgotten Australians: Supporting Survivors of Childhood Institutional Care in Australia*, pages 2–3, Alliance for Forgotten Australians (2008; Second edition 2010)



ASPECT OF CHILDHOOD 1: Food and Shelter

A 'We were always kept near starvation point ... All the best produce that we grew was sent to the markets to be sold. We were left with only the maggoty, the mouldy, the weevilly and the stale. I am not exaggerating. I wish I were. We were not allowed to have butter on our bread (even though we produced our own), while the warders and their families received all the milk, cream and butter they wanted. The animals we raised — mainly cows and pigs were better fed than us boys.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 141, page 89)

B 'Going without food as punishment was of no great worry, as hunger was part of our lives, quite often the food was not very palatable, or there was not enough to eat, or it was just plain stale.'

(2001 Senate Inquiry Submission 4, page 85)

C 'The officers did not eat the same food as us. They were seated on a stage looking down at us eating their lovely roast meals, whilst we were eating horrible stews.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 231, page 89)

D 'There were lots of orchards around the place, so we would raid them when we could. Also used to drink the milk before it went through the separator, and would also swallow raw eggs when I could get hold of them from the chooks. One thing we did learn as kids was to be crafty, that's how we survived.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 44, page 90)



Photo: courtesy CLEAN and State Library of New South Wales

F One day's food – Sydney City Mission

G 'The food was appalling, flavourless, overcooked, inedible.'

(2001 Senate Inquiry Confidential Submission 25 and Submission 36, page 85)

H 'The buildings we grew up in were unsuitable. They were architecturally marvellous castles, but growing up in huge cold empty spaces that did not resemble family homes at all was quite traumatising for little children.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry, page 88)

- [1] Summarise your findings about this aspect of the lives of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants in column C in your Summary Table.
- [2] Look back at the introductory activity. Would you now change any of your comments?
- [3] Do you think the photographic depiction of this aspect of childhood (Sources E and F) are reliable and accurate? Explain your reasons.
- [4] Report to the rest of the class on your findings for this aspect of life of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants in the twentieth century.



Photo: National Archives of Australia

E A photograph of children picking apples in the apple orchard at Tresca Children's Home, Exeter, Tasmania, 1958



ASPECT OF CHILDHOOD 2: Clothing and Possessions

A '[The person in charge] confiscated all my clothes, all my belongings, then used a pair of large black shears to cut off my shoulder length hair. There was no care taken to style the hair, it was HACKED. I was issued with regulation clothing, a number (43), horrible long dresses made of rough material, clumpy shoes and disgusting bloomers and singlets. I was not given a bra.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 284, page 97)

B 'We were never allowed to keep the presents as the nuns used to take them off us when we got back to the orphanage and would sell them at their fetes.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 172, page 88)

C Many former migrant children referred to the small number of personal possessions they had brought from Britain being removed from them on entry into the orphanage, including money, toys and clothing – "We had nothing of our former lives".'

(2001 Senate Inquiry report, page 74)

D 'I never owned a Doll or Teddy Bear. Those that did had to leave them in a "Special Room" on the top floor, where they would be shown to visitors, but rarely taken down for us kids to play with.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 409, page 88)

E 'All my clothes were hand-me-downs from the other kids and given out daily from a pile on the table.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 157, page 90)

F 'Clothing 200 growing children was almost as great a task as feeding them. Uniformity was best, for reasons of economy and practicality. Most of our clothes were hand-me-downs, and like the boots, were expected to last for ever. Saturday mornings we lined up for fresh clothes. Socks and singlets every Saturday; clean pyjamas and shirts every second Saturday; fresh pants once a month. Underpants were unknown until we were at secondary school.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 18, page 90)



In Howard C Jones, *Orphanage Survivors: A True story of St John's Thurgoona, Albany, 2010*

G 'We were not allowed to wear our shoes and were barefooted the whole time we were there, except when we were in a public place i.e. outside the confines of the home.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 231, page 90)

H Girls at St John's Orphanage, Thurgoona, NSW, ca 1950s

- [1]** Summarise your findings about this aspect of the lives of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants in column C in your Summary Table.
- [2]** Look back at the introductory activity. Would you now change any of your comments?
- [3]** Do you think the photographic depiction of this aspect of childhood (Source H) is reliable and accurate? Explain your reasons.
- [4]** Report to the rest of the class on your findings for this aspect of life of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants in the twentieth century.

ASPECT OF CHILDHOOD 3: Health and Hygiene

A 'I remember while we were there that we only got a bath once a week and that the same bath water was used for all the boys.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission, 199 page 90)

B 'At [the Home] we had a bath once a week, this bathing ritual was performed with me wearing a calico gown so as I wouldn't look at my body or see my reflection in the water.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 111, page 90)

C 'In the early years we cleaned our teeth with salt rubbed on our fingers. Later, in our teens, we got a toothbrush. Even then, there was no toothpaste. The dentist was called in emergencies only.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 18, page 91)

D 'I knew not to get sick if I could help it, because if you did, you were left in the dormitory, alone, no food, no medicine, nothing, just like you learnt to put up with trying to keep warm in freezing winters in shorts, shirts and bare feet, your arms and legs cracked and bleeding from the cold, pain every time you move and nothing you could do about it.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 217, page 111)

E 'I suffered so many severe attacks of tonsillitis throughout my childhood... There is not one account in my file of having tonsillitis even though I would tell whoever I was with at the time my throat was sore. No-one believed me as usual.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 35, page 111)

F 'It used to get very cold. I told [the staff] I was getting pain in my ankles, knees and wrists, they wouldn't believe me and said I was stupid, it was only growing pains. When I couldn't walk and my temperature was 105, they sent me to Royal Perth Hospital in an ambulance. I had acute rheumatic fever and was in hospital for 6 months. My mitral valve and aortic valve are damaged, and I have to take medicines for the rest of my life.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 180, page 111)

G 'I recall being kicked twice by a dairy cow. No medical treatment was offered on either occasion. The most risky thing I was part of doing was firing up the boiler and cutting up some of the wood at [the Home] where some boys were injured. [Describing the hard labour he said] I remember being hit on the head by a brick (I still carry the scars) no medical treatment was given.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 251, page 111)



Photo courtesy CLAN, photographer unknown

H Boys brushing their teeth at St Joseph's Orphanage, Hobart, Tasmania, circa 1950s



Photo: John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland

I Small children waiting to be immunized at Nudgee Orphanage, Brisbane, Queensland, ca 1928

- [1]** Summarise your findings about this aspect of the lives of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants in column C in your Summary Table.
- [2]** Look back at the introductory activity. Would you now change any of your comments?
- [3]** Do you think the photographic depiction of this aspect of childhood (Sources H and I) are reliable and accurate? Explain your reasons.
- [4]** Report to the rest of the class on your findings for this aspect of life of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants in the twentieth century.



ASPECT OF CHILDHOOD 4: Identity and Childhood

A 'All my life, as a child in those dreadful homes I was told I was "ugly", "would end up a prostitute" and "should never have been born". It took me years of struggle to even realise I was a person. It is only recently I have gained enough confidence to believe I am a decent person and as good as everyone else. We really never knew what we were.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 95, page 91)

B 'Because of being constantly told I was nothing & would end up in the gutter & no one wanted me or ever would, the core negative beliefs I have are my reality. They are the deepest most profound assumptions and expectations I have of myself, & therefore I find it hard to function as a "normal" human being, beyond my front door. This is just the way life is to me now, & these negative core beliefs continue to govern my life & reality.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 124, page 92)

C 'Due to the period in the Home I lost my complete childhood. I never knew my Uncles, Aunties, cousins. I have no happy memories of my childhood at all, [they] robbed me of that.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 198, page 92)

D 'We lived in fear during most of our childhood. And our childhood was stolen from us.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 266, page 92)

E 'Our clothes were numbered and we were not a name just a number. Any names we were given were terrible racist taunts.'

(2001 Senate Inquiry Confidential Submission 87, page 74)

F 'I have come to realise that we were never children. We were an unpaid workforce, with no reward, just punishment. At the beginning I said I don't remember being a child, I am saddened that most of the memories of my youth are pretty grim.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 169, page 92)



Photo: Salvation Army

G Unidentified boys at Bexley Boys' Home, a Salvation Army institution in New South Wales, circa 1930s

- [1]** Summarise your findings about this aspect of the lives of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants in column C in your Summary Table.
- [2]** Look back at the introductory activity. Would you now change any of your comments?
- [3]** Do you think the photographic depiction of this aspect of childhood (Source G) is reliable and accurate? Explain your reasons.
- [4]** Report to the rest of the class on your findings for this aspect of life of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants in the twentieth century.

ASPECT OF CHILDHOOD 5: Work



A 'We worked seven days a week arising at 5.45 am except on Sunday 6.30 am and were expected to start our jobs by 6.15 am, lights out at 7.30 pm. The entire week was rostered, and every moment of the day accounted for. Rostered jobs over the years ranged from working in the kitchen, laundry, washing wet bed sheets, scrubbing and polishing floors (at 8 years I was using an industrial polisher), washing windows, lighting the furnace for hot water, dusting, serving breakfast or dinner, making school lunches (humiliatingly wrapped in newspaper), bathing children, polishing shoes, collecting pig slops, scraping and washing dishes, polishing silver, cleaning bathrooms, filling coke buckets, getting children ready for school, working in the babies home, setting tables, working in the staff pantry, taking children to school, working in the isolation ward, the list goes on and is seemingly endless. I felt like I was serving time in prison.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 136, page 112)

B 'This place had a huge woodheap. The wood was brought in as 8 foot long pine off cuts. An officer would saw the wood on a bench saw to lengths big enough for a fireplace. We had to unload the truck of long lengths and stack them then cart the shorter pieces and either load the truck with them or stack them to be loaded at a later date. The wood was sold in and around Mt Barker as firewood. The woodheap was no easy task, it was hard work [for a 10 year old]. No talking just work.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 291, page 113)

D 'It was mid summer in the West Australian bush when we were forced to work on building sites...Building works were a priority, education a poor second. We had to climb scaffolding, carry up loads of bricks. There were many accidents, children falling off the scaffolding, bricks and rocks falling on children from above, children falling down from heat exhaustion. There were many accidents – safety was not a consideration.'

(2001 Senate Inquiry Confidential Submission 25, page 88)

E '[I was sent] to Hobart to the [Home's] Laundry. This was an awful place and very strange to me. I was only 8 but had to work every day in the laundry from after breakfast until 5 pm with a break for lunch. It was a huge laundry and we used to do the laundry for all the hotels, schools and hospitals in Hobart. I worked in the ironing room, sometimes I would iron but mostly I would fold and damp the laundry ready for the presses. They must have made heaps of money from doing all this laundry.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 182, page 113)

F 'We were not provided with any protected clothing, such as boots, and this resulted in the boys suffering from many foot injuries and other ailments, which also included cement and lime burns, to our fingers, but also to our feet, particularly between the toes. We also did suffer from severe sunburns to our faces, and to other parts of our body.'

(2001 Senate Inquiry Submission 36, pages 85-86)



Photo: photographer unknown

G Halivah Children's Home, NSW, circa 1930s



C Children building a swimming pool at Clontarf Boys Orphanage, Waterford, WA, ca 1956

- [1]** Summarise your findings about this aspect of the lives of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants in column C in your Summary Table.
- [2]** Look back at the introductory activity. Would you now change any of your comments?
- [3]** Do you think the photographic depiction of this aspect of childhood (Sources C and G) are reliable and accurate? Explain your reasons.
- [4]** Report to the rest of the class on your findings for this aspect of life of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants in the twentieth century.

ASPECT OF CHILDHOOD 6: Education

A 'Education in the homes was abysmal; when I entered the state school system I was so far behind my age group I was ridiculed and taunted by both teachers and fellow students; leaving me feeling different, dumb and excluded. I have carried those feelings through most of my adult life.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 321, page 109)

B 'I left [the Home] uneducated and illiterate. I had few social skills, and felt I was a social misfit.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 260, page 109)

C 'School was a non issue – about 100 children aged from 6 to 12 with one teacher in one room'.

(2001 Senate Inquiry Submission 23, page 97)

D 'We went out to public schools, the torment and ridicule of other students who weren't in the home made it difficult to learn as we were branded "homies".'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 279, page 110)

E 'We then marched to school in a group dressed in grey shorts and shirt supplied by the Salvos. Other kids at the school used to call us Homies and pick fights with us; at the time the teachers did not worry about it. I can not recall a teacher ever being nice to me. I feel we were treated at school different from the other children.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 198, page 110)

F 'I felt victimised at school and used to get the cuts a lot for getting sums wrong. I found it hard to learn and just remember trying so hard to be quiet and "invisible" so that I wouldn't get into trouble. I gained nothing from my schooling.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 181, page 110)



G Blackboard teaching at Dalwood Home, Seaforth, NSW, 1929

- [1]** Summarise your findings about this aspect of the lives of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants in column C in your Summary Table.
- [2]** Look back at the introductory activity. Would you now change any of your comments?
- [3]** Do you think the photographic depiction of this aspect of childhood (Source G) is reliable and accurate? Explain your reasons.
- [4]** Report to the rest of the class on your findings for this aspect of life of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants in the twentieth century.



ASPECT OF CHILDHOOD 7: Love and Affection

A 'I was never shown any love at all you were just a number to them not even a name.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 198, page 92)

B 'We had no nurturing, no love, no hugs, no kisses all necessary in ones upbringing, it was nearly 45 years before we could hug each other when we met and talk openly about what we had been through.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 93, page 92)

C 'I was trying to get some caring or love from anyone. I remember talking to the laundry lady and trying to get some caring from her but it seemed that all the adults in the place were totally cold to the children.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 150, page 93)

D 'My biggest complaint is that I was never offered or given anything that even vaguely resembled nurturing. No affirmation of the person I was becoming, no encouragement, no warmth, and absolutely no affection, not under any circumstances. The Manager lived upstairs with his family, providing all 16 residents with a tantalising but extraordinarily painful glimpse of the loving family life we so desired. He and his family made absolutely certain that we all knew our station in life, and reinforced our collective worthlessness.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 28, page 93)

E 'The special training I was to receive at [the Home] was designed to make me believe I was unloved and unlovable, unwanted, worthless and a burden on society who would never amount to anything. Many of these thoughts I still carry.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 20, page 93)

Photo: courtesy CLAN National Orphanage Museum
<http://forgottenaustralianshistory.gov.au/exhibition.html>



F Sign from the Methodist Babies Home, Victoria, ca 1929-1975

G 'There was no one to trust, to confide in, to cuddle, to read us bedtime stories. No one gave us an affectionate 'goodnight' or stopped for a chat. And yet all the while I ached with a question that would not go away. What can be so wrong with our parents that makes it better to be brought up by such cruel and uncaring people as this?'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 18, page 93)

H 'The most difficult part of all this is the fact that you had no one to turn to for some form of comfort. You just bury it, no way to deal with it. You'd learn to hide emotions in this place, because you might get strapped for it as I did.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 291, page 93)

I '...I still felt completely alone, a nobody without a future, feeling completely worthless and unloved. ... No one gave me any guidance or direction or basic support or love. All these are fundamental to any child growing up.'

(2001 Senate Inquiry Submission 120, page 98)

J Children in their cots, Children's Homes, NSW, 1933-34



Photo: Dixon Galleries, State Library of NSW

- [1]** Summarise your findings about this aspect of the lives of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants in column C in your Summary Table.
- [2]** Look back at the introductory activity. Would you now change any of your comments?
- [3]** Do you think the photographic depiction of this aspect of childhood (Sources F and J) are reliable and accurate? Explain your reasons.
- [4]** Report to the rest of the class on your findings for this aspect of life of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants in the twentieth century.

ASPECT OF CHILDHOOD 8: Family



A 'There was no effort at all to reunite children and parents; in fact, the reverse was the case. When I was 14 and started to work, which meant moving from the Home to the Hostel, I was given a bundle of letters from my mother. These had been written over the eight (8) years I had been there, in the meantime I had thought that my mother did not love me and did not want me back.'

(2001 Senate Inquiry Submission 82, page 74)

B 'The only gripe I really have is "why didn't they tell me I wasn't an orphan and that I had a family all along?"'

(2001 Senate Inquiry Report, page 137)

C 'Imagine being told that at the age of five years old that your mother is dead only to find out five years later that she is alive & well and wants to come & visit you.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 111, page 106)

D 'Our entire family was ripped apart and we can never get back together. They split me away from my 1-week-old brother and we never knew each other until we were old. I had cousins in [the Home] and the nuns never told me. I never knew my family. How can you get back together when you don't know each other?'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 264, page 105)

E 'I used to see [my brother] every Sunday because we went to the same church. We could only wave to each other because we weren't allowed to speak. It was shocking, I remember thinking why can't I talk to my brother?'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 185, page 107)

G 'It was during my early primary school days when I was told either by my foster parents or by an employee of the Department that my parents and siblings were dead, having been killed in a car accident. I have since learned from my records that my mother and father and brother had written to me however I did not receive any of these letters nor were I told of their existence... Since I learned of the existence of my family I have been in a state of trauma, anxiety, anger and suffering from major stresses related to the knowledge that I have been lied to for the past 35 years.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 142, page 106)

I A resident of an institution explains how the break-up of family continued when she had her own child: '[The matron] cruelly promoted adoption above my rights to know of alternative options to keep my own child. I was not informed of the Social Welfare benefits that were available to me at that time. I was not even told that I did not have to sign a consent form. I remember being made to sit at the desk, I was sobbing and yelling for my baby and all I got was this nun pushing papers under my face and telling me to sign here, here and here.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 104, page 108)



Joanna Penglase, *Orphans of the Living, Growing Up in 'Care' in Twentieth Century Australia*, Fremantle Press, Fremantle, 2007

F Photograph of Joanna Penglase (right), aged about 4, with her mother, sister and brother. The girls had been in a Home for at least three years when this photo was taken. Joanna has written a book, *Orphans of the Living*, analysing the institutional care system and the experiences of children in care. In her book she shares her own experiences of the loss of her family and growing up without a sense of identity.

H 'The staff saw no reason to treat brothers and sisters as part of a family. Instead, children were separated into age groups and some siblings were even sent to different orphanages depending on what room was available here, there and elsewhere.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 18, page 107)

- [1]** Summarise your findings about this aspect of the lives of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants in column C in your Summary Table.
- [2]** Look back at the introductory activity. Would you now change any of your comments?
- [3]** Do you think the photographic depiction of this aspect of childhood (Source F) is reliable and accurate? Explain your reasons.
- [4]** Report to the rest of the class on your findings for this aspect of life of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants in the twentieth century.

ASPECT OF CHILDHOOD 9: Punishment and Discipline

A 'The superintendent at that time ran her school for girls like some sort of Nazi officer making us scrub and polish floors for hours on our hands and knees for being disobedient which might I add was for minor things such as losing your hair brush, talking when you were not supposed to be talking, answering back etc.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 272, page 96)

B 'The usual method of discipline was belting the boys around the legs with a string of keys and many times the boys who were hit were left with bleeding legs.'

(2001 Senate Inquiry Submission 94, page 81)

C 'I loved to climb trees and walk along the fence tops. For this I was caned. The joy of climbing the trees outweighed the pain of the caning.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 192, page 97)

D 'Any glancing sideways or looking up was met with what Ben said was the standard punishment that occurred at [the Home]. This was the loss of a meal or the loss of all meals over a period of 24 to 48 hours. The punishment for boys who habitually broke the rule was being made to wear a cardboard cereal box that had two holes cut for eyes. The boy had to keep wearing the box until it fell to pieces. Ben recalls that later a set of leather blinkers was made, similar to those that a horse would use, and the boy had to wear these for a set number of days.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 329, page 97)

E 'The punishment inflicted was to have her hair shaved off, and she [a young girl of 7 or 8] was compelled to wear a sugar bag as a dress all day for a period of time. She even wore it to school, which was a public school some distance from the institution, and the children had to walk along public streets to get to this school. It would be difficult to imagine the trauma, that this child was compelled to suffer, or the effect it would have had on her in later life.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 414, page 97)

F 'The bedwetters received such humiliation, they would have to parade around the room with their wet smelly sheets draped over their shoulders.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 111, page 98)

G 'Four kids would hold the offender down and a nun would hit the bare buttocks with a leather belt, anything up to six times. Once I was hit so hard I could not sit down for two days.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 364, page 101)

H 'We were belted on a regular basis by the warders. They were savage beatings. Boots and all. Time and time again. It was a nightmare. I often wished I were dead. This happened so often it was frightening thinking about when would be the next time.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 148, page 63)



I Artwork of life at Westbrook Boys Home, Toowoomba, Qld

J 'The white line was the worst punishment. We were required to stand to attention, without bending the knees. No one was allowed to talk to or look at a child on the white line because those children were "a disgrace", to the nuns. No-one wanted to be friends with anyone who had been sent to the white line. Those children were isolated and vilified by the other terrified children.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 419, page 100)

- [1]** Summarise your findings about this aspect of the lives of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants in column C in your Summary Table.
- [2]** Look back at the introductory activity. Would you now change any of your comments?
- [3]** Do you think the artistic depiction of this aspect of childhood (Source I) is reliable and accurate? Explain your reasons.
- [4]** Report to the rest of the class on your findings for this aspect of life of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants in the twentieth century.



ASPECT OF CHILDHOOD 10: Safety and Protection

A 'The level of deception, the deliberate giving of wrong information or withholding of information, the policies of separating siblings, all make it very hard to accept that everything was done simply for the benefit of the children. It indicates an abuse of power and a disregard for the feelings of the mothers and children, and it was certainly felt as such by many Former Child Migrants.'

(2001 Senate Inquiry quoting UK Health Committee Report, page 75)

C 'I can't get some of the terrible things he did to me out of my head, they loom in the shadows of my life and haunt me. This man took my virginity, my innocence, my development, my potential.'

(2004 Senate inquiry Submission 239, page 103)

D 'All the time while the priest was assaulting me (or other children) the sister would stand at the door looking the other way. If another sister came she would flash her torch on the ground and the priest would stand behind the partition until the sister flashed her torch again. After this he would resume his abuse.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 412, page 103)

B 'While at [the Home] I was abused sexually by an officer, and thought by now this was the normal thing for us boys to endure.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 278, page 103)



Photo: Jason McCarthy, National Museum of Australia

E Sign held up by Wilma Robb at the National Apology to the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants, 2009

Photo: courtesy CLAW and Ivy Getchell



F Artwork created by Ivy Williams, resident of Parramatta Girls' Home, 1947–50

- [1]** Summarise your findings about this aspect of the lives of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants in column C in your Summary Table.
- [2]** Look back at the introductory activity. Would you now change any of your comments?
- [3]** Do you think the photographic and artistic depiction of this aspect of childhood (Sources E and F) are reliable and accurate? Explain your reasons.
- [4]** Report to the rest of the class on your findings for this aspect of life of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants in the twentieth century.

Conclusions, messages and reflections

When all groups have reported back on their findings about the aspects of life they have focused on, consider these questions as a class.

- 1 What were the worst personal and social impacts of the 'care' experience of these Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants?
- 2 Why do you think these abuses were able to occur in Australian society?
- 3 Why do you think there was not an outcry against the abuses and the physical, emotional and educational neglect?
- 4 How did many children interpret the treatment they received when they were enduring these experiences? (i.e. What did they often come to believe about themselves as a result of these experiences?)
- 5 What have been the long-term impacts of these experiences?
- 6 If children had been treated in this way in families, they would have been taken from their parents. Yet they were treated this way in care. Why do you think authorities allowed this to happen?
- 7 There is evidence of resistance to the system and its abuses. Why do you think there might not have been more resistance by individuals?
- 8 'The days of low self-esteem, of painful memories and nightmares are decreasing. The happy times are beginning to outweigh the sad. The experiences I had in 'care' are forever imprinted in my mind, on my body and in my heart. But I want to finish by saying some things to those who abused me.
You did not win!!! You never touched the real me. You didn't even know the real me. You never knew that I was a strong and beautiful human being.
You did not crush my spirit and one day you WILL have to face your maker and answer for what you did to me and to too many other precious and beautiful children.'
(2004 Senate Inquiry Submission 412, page 170).
Why is it important to acknowledge that Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants, as well as being victims in many cases, are also victors and survivors?
- 9 Many who committed the various abuses against children in the institutions they were placed in were never brought to justice. Why do you think this was the case?

- 10 The evidence used in this unit comes from the submissions made to the two Senate Inquiries. Six hundred and fourteen and two hundred and fifty two submissions, respectively, were received, covering many Homes, orphanages and other institutions or forms of care, in all states. As with other Inquiries the personal testimonies that were collected as part of the Senate Inquiry were not tested in any way to establish their accuracy.

(i) What do you think is the value of these submissions as historical evidence? Explain your reasons.

The institutions themselves would generally not have kept detailed records of incidents. However, the Senate Inquiries heard from health professionals and former institutional staff who witnessed incidents of abuse.

(ii) Does this new information change your view about the value of the submissions? Explain your reasons.

- 11 It is likely that in an inquiry people who had good experiences would be less likely to give evidence about the institutions they lived in.

(i) Do you think this means that the collection of submissions is lessened as historical evidence of what happened in these institutions? Explain your reasons.

(ii) Why do you think that not all Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants of institutions chose to participate in the Senate Inquiry?

- 12 The 2009 Senate Inquiry report, *Lost Innocents and Forgotten Australians revisited* recommended apologies to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants — from institutions and the people who ran them, and from the state, territory and federal governments. What do you think Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants would want to hear in an apology? Put down key points, and then look at the next page to see one example.

- 13 Another recommendation is for memorials. Suggest what you think might be an appropriate memorial to acknowledge the experience of the Forgotten Australians and their place in Australian history.

- 14 What does a study of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants help you understand about aspects of Australian history during the twentieth century? Does it help you understand the lives of marginalised and vulnerable children in those times?

Apologies

Many of the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants who provided evidence to the Senate Inquiries commented on an apology:

'We need our suffering and experiences acknowledged. Australian Federal and State governments should acknowledge that they had and still have a duty of care.'

(2001 Senate Inquiry page 236)

'You can accept an apology, but you cannot forget ... I know they tried their best to apologise and everything; we have got to accept that. But I always say it is too late.'

(2001 Senate Inquiry page 235)

'I need this apology today to release me from the pains of my past and to help assist me out of victimhood that I still get when having any dealings with any government official.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry page 193)

'I cannot forget, will not forgive and no apologies accepted.'

(2004 Senate Inquiry page 194)

Both Senate committees recommended an apology.

(i) The 2001 Inquiry

The Committee strongly believes that the Commonwealth Government should issue a formal statement acknowledging its predecessors' role and responsibility in promoting the child migration schemes; and the impact that these schemes had on the lives of many Former Child Migrants ... the statement should express sorrow and regret for the hurt and distress suffered by child migrants, especially those who were the victims of abuse and assault at the hands of those in the institutions who were in charge of them. The Committee believes that while the policies may have been well-intentioned they had, in many cases, unforeseen and unintended consequences. The Committee believes that, as the child migration policies were arranged and administered in conjunction with State Governments and the receiving agencies, State Governments and receiving agencies, that have not already done so, should also acknowledge their respective roles in the child migration schemes and the significant harm done to many children in their care in the various institutions across the country.

(Page 238)

(ii) The 2004 Inquiry

The Committee believes that governments, the Churches and agencies should issue formal statements acknowledging their role in past institutional care policies and practices and the impact this had on the lives of many care leavers. These statements should express sorrow and apologise for the physical, psychological and social harm caused as a result of the care leavers' experiences as children in institutional care. The Committee also considers that these acknowledgments must be accompanied by other positive measures as recommended in the report to ensure that they are not regarded as merely 'empty gestures' by the care leavers and the community generally.

(Page xvi)

Several states, territories and religious organisations that ran institutions for care, have made apologies. Some are made only on websites. Some have been more apparently sincere than others.

- 1 Imagine that you have been asked to write the apology by the Australian Government to the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants. List the key ideas you would include in your speech.
- 2 Here are extracts from the Australian Government's Apology to the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants in 2009. Read it and decide if you were a person involved how you would feel about this.

Extracts from the Address by former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd at the Apology to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants Parliament House 16 November 2009

Parliament House 16 November 2009

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, the absolute 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 you were left cold, hungry and alone and with nowhere to hide and nobody to whom to turn.

We look back with shame that so many of you were left cold, hungry and alone and with nowhere to hide and with nobody, absolutely nobody, to whom to turn.

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, violated sexually.

And 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 say sorry.

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

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 our own children, 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 own 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 is so very, very personal. Pain is so profoundly disabling.

So, let us together, as a nation, allow this apology to begin to heal this pain.

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 hue and colour to do all in our power to never let this happen again.

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

The Government apology had bipartisan support. Then Opposition Leader, Malcolm Turnbull, made a speech in reply to the Prime Minister's National Apology. Mr Turnbull told Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants:

Today we acknowledge that, already feeling alone, abandoned, and left without love, many of you were beaten and abused, physically, sexually, mentally - treated like objects not people - leaving you to feel of even less worth.

Today we acknowledge that with broken hearts and breaking spirits you were left in the custody - we can hardly call it "care" - of too many people whose abuse and neglect of you, whose exploitation of you, made a mockery of their claim that you were taken from your own family "for your own good."

Today we acknowledge that your parents who, ground down by poverty, surrendered you into the hands of those who claimed, and your parents believed, to be able to give you a better life, but instead exposed you to horrors no child should ever have to endure.

It is no wonder, so many of you say that when you went into the "home" you felt you were going out of the frying pan into the fire.

Today I want you to know we admire you, we believe you, we love you.

3 Do you think the National Apology and the Opposition's support would help the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants? Do you think Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants would react differently to the two speeches? Explain your views, referring specifically to how each of the people quoted at the top of page 18 might be expected to respond to this apology.

To see some of the reactions of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants to the Government's Apology you can go to:

- www.theage.com.au/national/suffer-the-children-a-nation-apologises-for-its-neglect-20091114-ifo9.html
- www.theherald.com.au/news/local/news/general/maryville-victim-says-apology-wont-heal-him-after-years-of-abuse/1677901.aspx
- www.nma.gov.au/blogs/inside/

Two recent films about the experience of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants are *Oranges and Sunshine* and *The Forgotten Australians*. You can access study guides to these at www.metromagazine.com.au/studyguides/study.asp

Further reading

National Inquiries:

Lost Innocents: Righting the Record – Inquiry into child migration, Commonwealth of Australia, 2001

www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/clac_ctte/completed_inquiries/1999-02/child_migrat/report/index.htm

Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children, Commonwealth of Australia, 2004

www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/clac_ctte/completed_inquiries/2004-07/inst_care/report/

Lost Innocents and Forgotten Australians revisited: Report on the progress with the implementation of the recommendations of the Lost Innocents and Forgotten Australians Reports, Commonwealth of Australia, 2009

www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/clac_ctte/recs_lost_innocents_forgotten_aust_rpts/report/report.pdf

State Inquiries:

Forde Report (Qld): www.communityservices.qld.gov.au/community/redress-scheme/publications.html

Mullighan Report (SA)

Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry: Allegations of Sexual Abuse and Death from Criminal Conduct [www.sa.gov.au/upload/franchise/Crime_justice_and_the_law/Mullighan_Inquiry/CISC - Complete.pdf](http://www.sa.gov.au/upload/franchise/Crime_justice_and_the_law/Mullighan_Inquiry/CISC_-_Complete.pdf)

O'Grady Report (Tas):

Listen to the Children: Review of Claims of Abuse from Adults in State Care as Children <http://www.ombudsman.tas.gov.au/>

Government Apologies:

Then Prime Minister's National Apology to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants <http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/110625/20091116-1801/www.pm.gov.au/node/6321.html>

Then Opposition Leader Malcolm Turnbull's speech in reply to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants www.liberal.org.au/Latest-News/2009/11/16/Apology-to-the-Forgotten-Australians.aspx

Former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown to Former Child Migrants webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+number10.gov.uk/news/speeches-and-transcripts/2010/02/statement-on-child-migrants-2-22583

Queensland Government to former children in care who suffered harm in a state mental health facility in Queensland.

www.clan.org.au/images/qld_mental_health_apology.pdf

For NSW, VIC, TAS, WA and SA apologies see CLAN's website:

http://www.clan.org.au/apologies_received.php

National Advocacy and Support Organisations:

Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA): www.forgottenaustralians.org.au

Care Leavers Australia Network (CLAN): www.clan.org.au

Child Migrants Trust (CMT): www.childmigrantstrust.com

International Association of Former Child Migrants and their Families (IAFCM&F): www.childmigrantstrust.com/intl-association

National History Projects

Forgotten Australians Our History website: <http://forgottenaustralians.history.gov.au/>

National Museum of Australia: *Inside, Life in a Children's Home*

<http://nma.gov.au/blogs/inside/>

National Library of Australia: Forgotten Australians and former Child Migrant oral history project www.nla.gov.au/oh/fafcm/

Australian National Maritime Museum: On their own – Britain's child migrants

<http://www.anmm.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=1659>

www.britainschildmigrants.com/

<http://www.anmm.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=1790>

Books by Forgotten Australians

Frank Golding, *An Orphan's Escape*, Lothian Books, 2005

Joanna Penglase, *Orphans of the Living. Growing Up in 'Care' in Twentieth Century Australia*, Fremantle Press, Fremantle, 2007

If students feel that they are in need of help they can contact Lifeline www.lifeline.org.au or Kids Helpline – Teens www.kidshelp.com.au/teens/, or see a teacher or school counsellor or school chaplain for advice and support.



Creating a museum exhibition

In the November 2009 Apology to the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants, then Prime Minister Rudd said:

It is important however, that this not be regarded as a single point in history. Our view is that it would be helpful for the nation, however painful, to properly record your experiences, where you deem that to be appropriate.

This can assist the nation to learn from your experiences.

As a result, the Australian Government is supporting projects with both the National Library and the National Museum which will provide future generations with a solemn reminder of the past.

To ensure not only that your experiences are heard, but also that they will never ever be forgotten.

And in doing so we must always remember the advice of the sages – that a nation that forgets its past is condemned to relive it.

The National Museum of Australia is currently working with the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants to create a temporary and travelling exhibition of their experiences, based on objects, photographs and stories. Here is a description of the exhibition which is due to open at the Museum in November 2011.

Inside: Life in Children's Homes **The National Museum of Australia exhibition**

What was it like to grow up in a Children's Home?

This is the question that the National Museum of Australia will raise in its exhibition *Inside: Life in Children's Homes*.

The exhibition tells the history from the point of view of those who were children in the Homes. Tell us what it was like. Tell us what happened to you.

Former residents of Children's Homes have generously donated or loaned precious objects from their time in a Home, or from the lives they have made after the Homes.

This is the first time that an exhibition on this topic has been toured by the National Museum, and the first time that many Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants will have seen their history recognised in an exhibition. These are histories that are missing from our national narrative and this exhibition will be part of the process of putting these histories into the Australian story.

The exhibition will be able to be viewed at the Museum from 16 November 2011 to 26 February 2012 and will then tour nationally (see the Museum's website for touring venues and dates closer to the opening in November).

Follow the personal accounts of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants and find out more about the exhibition on our website: www.nma.gov.au/blogs/inside

- 1** Look back at the introductory activity on pages 2-4. Why would this collection of images create such a different impression to what you have now learned? How do you account for the fact that these images were the ones commonly used to show what life was like for the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants?
- 2** **YOUR TASK** is to create your own Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants exhibition, and use this experience to critically analyse the National Museum of Australia exhibition when it is completed in November 2011.

To produce your exhibition you need to create a collection of 10 displays, using an object for each of the 10 aspects of childhood you have explored.

In putting together your exhibition you need to imagine what a significant object might be for each aspect, and create a display page for it, using the template on page 21.

For each object you 'create' you need to explain:

- what the object is (and if possible draw or collect a photograph of such an object)
- the story or context of that object
- the significance of that object — what it tells us about that aspect of the experience of the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants.

Then you need to write your final caption, putting all this information together in a caption of no more than 50 words.

Discuss the four examples on pages 22-24 of real objects that are likely to appear in the National Museum of Australia exhibition on the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants, and then 'create' your own display using the template on page 21.

When you have put all 10 exhibits together, use the list of criteria for analysing a museum site study on page 21 to critically analyse your own display.

You can also use this list to examine the National Museum exhibit when it is completed in November 2011.



Create your own exhibition

'Create' your own object and its imaginary origins, to be part of your exhibition, using a display card with these headings for each object. Each of the 10 aspects of childhood studied above will need a particular object to illustrate it.



The object	
Who it is associated with	
Where it came from	
The aspect it illustrates	
Its story and context	
Its message or meaning	
50 word caption	

When you have put your exhibition together, use these questions to critically evaluate it.

SITE STUDY — Analysing a Museum Display

Aspects to consider	The Museum display
What does the display show?	
Is the historical context explained clearly?	
Is the significance of this display clearly explained?	
Is a variety of types of evidence displayed?	
Are the objects displayed authentic for that event or period?	
Are these objects the best possible ones to be displayed?	
Are the text descriptions clear and informative?	
Do the surroundings influence my impression of the display?	
How is the display arranged?	
Is the nature of the event clearly identified (e.g. am I told if it is controversial or contested)?	
If so, is a variety of viewpoints clearly and fairly put?	
Do I know where the evidence has come from and what sort of evidence it is?	
Is it giving me a particular message?	
Is its purpose to present objects (neutral), or to explain (impartial), or to argue a particular view (partisan)?	
At the end, do I feel that I really understand the situation?	
My initial impression of the display?	
My final judgement about the display?	

EXAMPLE 1

As a teenage girl admitted to Parramatta Girls' Home in Fleet Street, Parramatta, Wilma Robb, who had never been charged with a criminal offence, believes she was treated as a de facto criminal. She was assaulted, humiliated, deprived of privacy. Wilma was defiant and hence received further punishment — solitary confinement and medication with the psychotropic drug Largactil.

Because of her refusal to be broken by the system, Wilma was sent to the Hay Institution for Girls located in the township of Hay in the Riverina district of NSW which opened in 1961 as a maximum security institution for girls, aged 13 to 18, from the Parramatta Girls Home.

Girls were sent to Hay despite their having committed no crime and without a legal trial. Girls were not permitted to speak, without permission, or to establish eye contact with anyone. This rule was enforced despite the fact that the 'silent system' was outlawed in New South Wales in the late 1800s. Girls endured a regime of hard labour without school education.

Prior to the national apology, Families Minister Jenny Macklin contacted Wilma asking her to submit her personal history so that it may be considered as part of Kevin Rudd's speech. In her letter to Kevin Rudd, she explained that the Hay Institution for Girls was the equivalent of a colonial jail in its use of silent treatment. Robb was concerned that Rudd's use of the word 'institution' would not cover her prison experience. Robb realised that she may not have a chance to say this on the day, so she grabbed one of the family's linen table napkins, and wrote 'WHAT ABOUT CHILDREN'S PRISON'S' in thick ink marker on each side of the napkin. When the moment came, she was nervous about holding it up.



Summarise this information, and use it to create a caption:

The object	
Story or context	
Significance	
Caption (50 words maximum)	

Photo: Jason McCarthy, National Museum of Australia

EXAMPLE 2

The Methodist Babies Home in Balwyn (Vic) was established to care for neglected babies and to provide for their adoption into Christian families. However, if the young children at the Babies' Home had not been adopted by the age of four, they would be transferred to the Children's Home. They were transferred yet again at the age of nine, this time to the farm school at Tally Ho.

By the 1950s physical neglect of babies as a reason for admission was less common but pressures on single mothers meant increasing numbers of their babies were admitted for adoption, while babies whose families were in crisis were accepted on a temporary basis.



Summarise this information, and use it to create a caption:

The object	
Story or context	
Significance	
Caption (50 words maximum)	

Photo: courtesy CLAN National Orphanage Museum
<http://forgettenaustralianhistory.gov.au/exhibition.html>



EXAMPLE 3

This soft toy was donated to the National Museum by Jeanette Blick. Jeanette was a child in Orana Methodist Home for Children, Burwood, Victoria. The toy was made by prisoners at Pentridge Gaol. The teddy bear was given to Jeanette about 1962. She recalls receiving the gift:

'I can remember receiving the teddy one Christmas as I did not have a family to go to for the holidays, so I had to remain in Orana over Christmas. Christmas Day, I remember finding the teddy on the bottom of my bed. I did not know where it had come from as it was not wrapped and there was no tag/card on it.

I took it to the cottage mother and told her someone had left this on my bed and she said it was for me. She also told me that the prisoners in Pentridge Gaol had made the teddy.

I think I cried most of the day. This was the first gift I had received in years.

In the New Year a family came and took me for the rest of the holidays. I left the teddy on my bed as I was instructed to do (I wanted to take it with me but was not allowed) and when I came back it was gone.

I never saw it again until I opened my suitcase when I arrived in Cobram at my mother's house. Someone must have put it in the case with the toothbrush, pyjamas and knickers that were there as well. I do not know who had done this or why.'

Summarise this information, and use it to create a caption:

The object	
Story or context	
Significance	
Caption <i>(50 words maximum)</i>	

EXAMPLE 4

This is a piece of concrete, not much bigger in size than a hand. It was rescued from the demolition of the swimming pool at the former Clontarf Boys Town Christian Brothers Home in Western Australia. There is a photograph of the pool being made on page 11 of this unit. The photo was taken by Michael O'Donoghue, who used his Box Brownie camera to take not only this, but many photos around the Boys Town. His own photo is on page 2, taken with this same camera.

Clontarf, like Bindoon, another Christian Brothers institution located outside Perth, used the labour of the boys to build the institutional infrastructure. Michael has vivid memories of building the pool. They laboured before and after school and at weekends to complete it, using picks and shovels. Boys who did not work hard enough risked being beaten. Michael still suffers the effects of an injury he received from a blow across the chest by one particular Brother.

Violence, both physical and sexual, was part of the life of boys at the Boys Town. Some boys suffered more. 'I was this Brother's 'punching bag,' ' remembers Michael.



Later in life, a doctor asked him if he had ever been in a major traffic accident, because his body bore all the signs of such a major trauma.

Michael came to Australia as a Child Migrant. His mother had placed him in a Home in Britain as a young child, after the loss of Michael's French-Canadian soldier father. Michael was chosen to come out to Australia as part of the Child Migrant scheme, although his mother had never given permission for him to be taken out of the country. He left England on his 11th birthday and arrived in Perth in August 1953. He went straight to Clontarf and remembers the shock of seeing poorly-clad boys, who to him seemed clearly neglected. He was sent from Clontarf just on 16, having been forced to leave school a year earlier, although he had asked to continue.

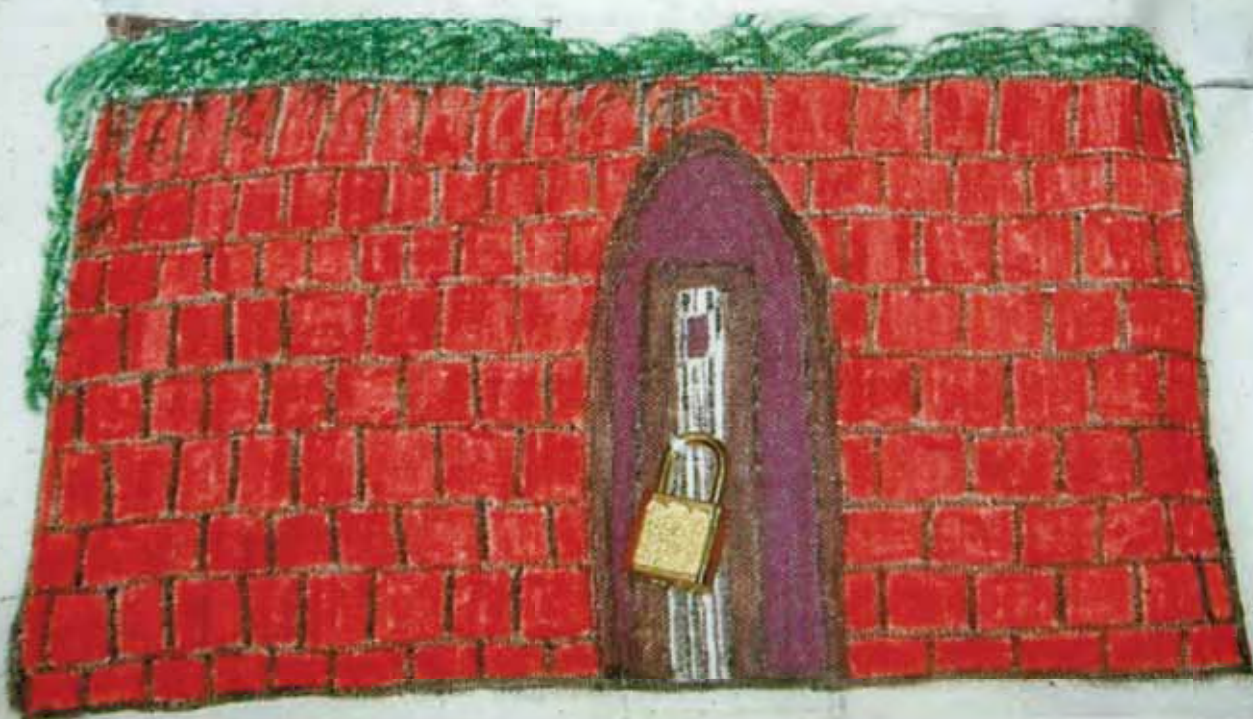
Summarise this information, and use it to create a caption:

The object	
Story or context	
Significance	
Caption (50 words maximum)	

89

I am a forgotten Australian,
one of the sole survivors
of the child welfare scandal
in Australian history. I withstood
their scathing remarks and treatment.
But like a tower I still stand tall.

Ivy Williams
1947-50



























THE SYDNEY CITY
MISSIONS
CHILDRENS' HOMES
ONE DAYS FOOD

20lbs
SUGAR

86
PINTS MILK

30lbs
POTATOES



**Visitors are requested
not to touch the
Babies**

WHAT ABOUT
CHILDREN'S
PRISONS





THE SYDNEY CITY
MISSIONS
CHILDRENS' HOMES
ONE DAYS FOOD

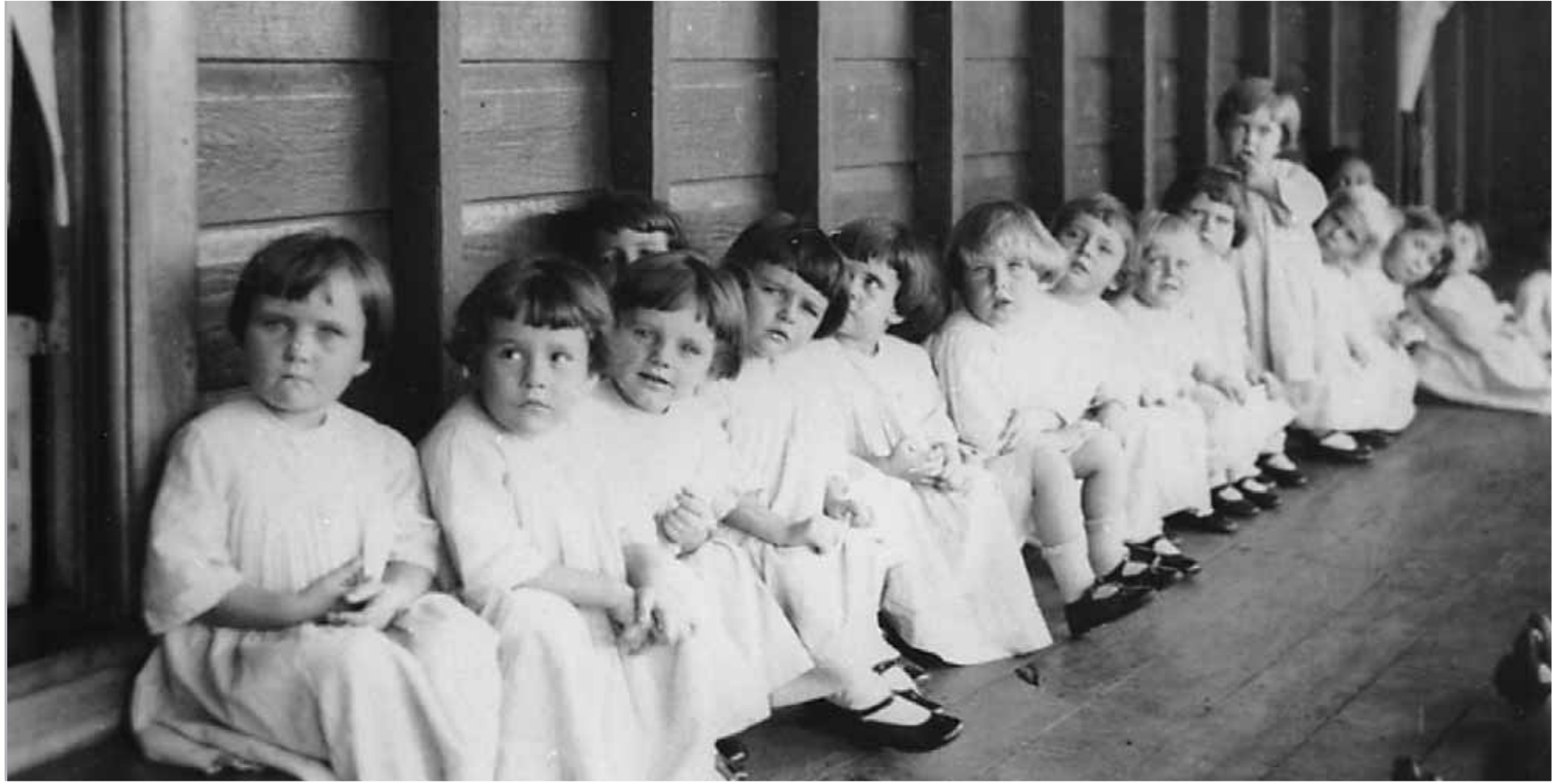
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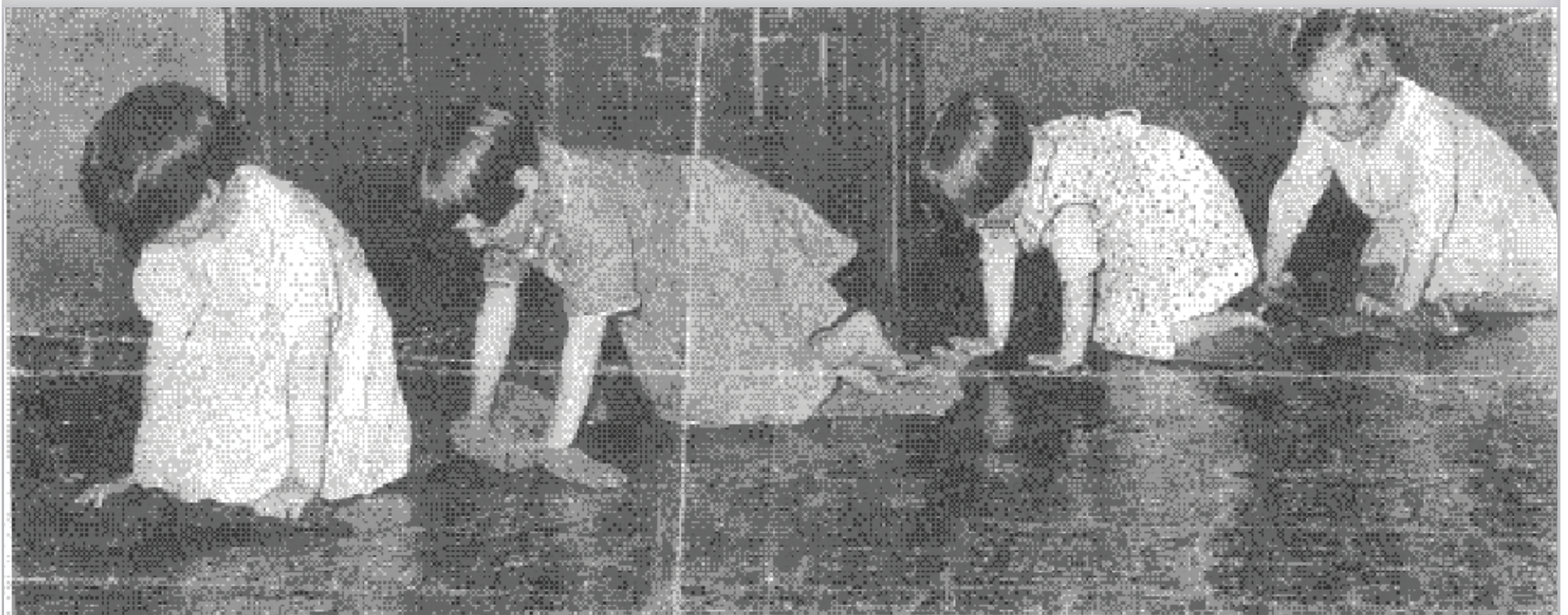










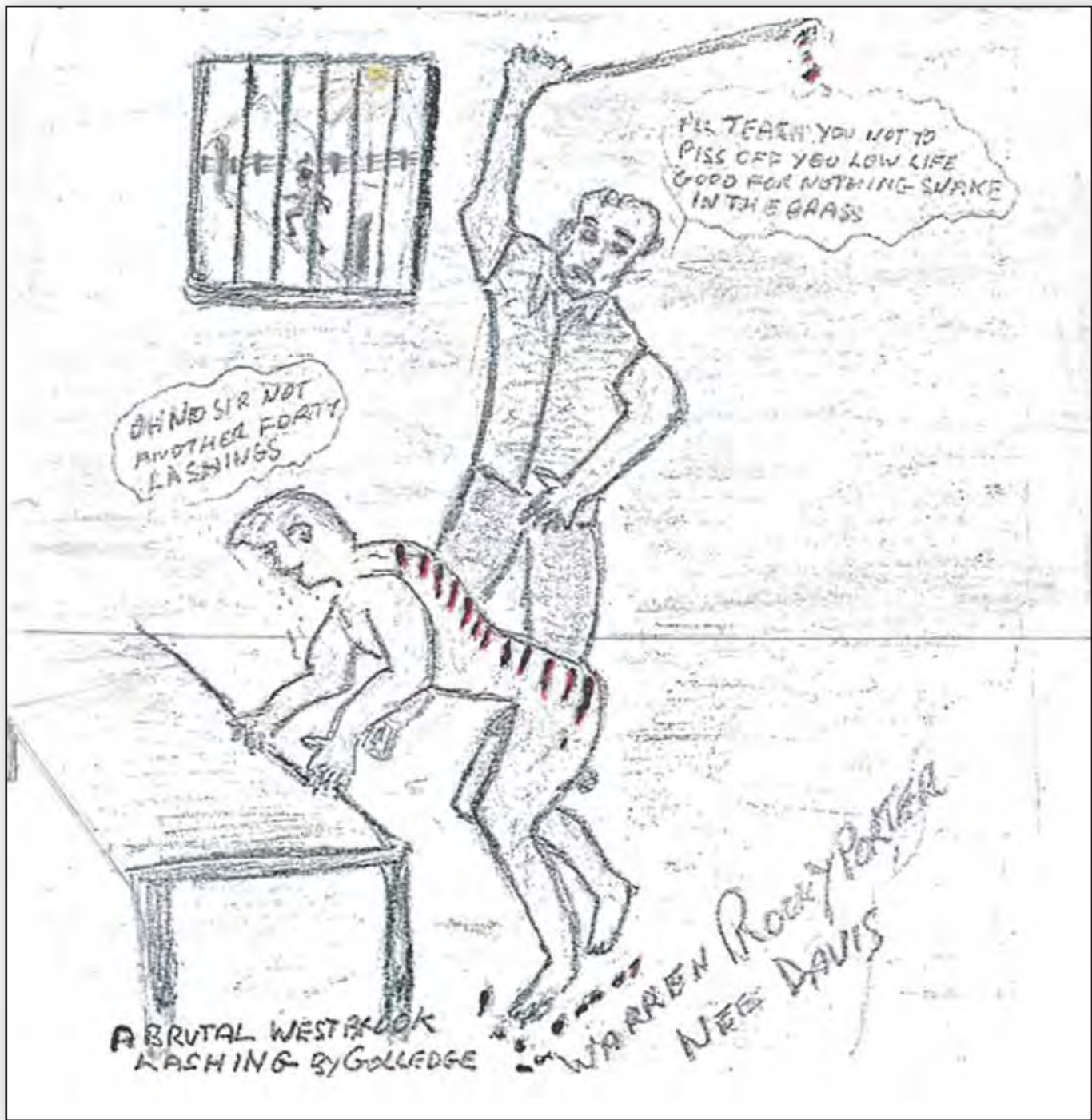




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A BRUTAL WESTBROOK WASHING BY GOLLEDGE

WARREN ROCKY PORTER
NEE DAVIS

WHAT ABOUT
CHILDREN'S
PRISONS

24

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