

17 April 2019

The Royal Commission into Aged Care  
Quality and Safety  
GPO Box 1151  
**ADELAIDE SA 5001**

Dear Commissioners

We note that you have called for submissions to help inform the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. We write to raise several matters for your consideration in relation to the care of the Forgotten Australians as they age. We would welcome the opportunity to participate in the Royal Commission through roundtables or hearings to ensure the voice of this particularly vulnerable group is heard during the life of the Commission.

### **The Forgotten Australians**

The term Forgotten Australians refers to people who experienced institutional or out-of-home care in Australia during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The term was first used in 2004 by the Australian Parliament's Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs in its Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care. There are approximately 500,000 Forgotten Australians.

We know that significant numbers of these people experienced abuse and neglect while in care as children, including sexual abuse.

The experiences of these people as children has, for many, resulted in lifelong trauma, physical and mental health issues, lower education and employment levels, family dysfunction and social disconnection.

### **The Forde Foundation**

The Forde Foundation was established in August 2000 by the Queensland Government...

*"... for the relief of poverty, for the advancement of education, training or development, personal and social support, relief of sickness, suffering distress, general enhancement of social and economic wellbeing or for any other purposes beneficial to persons who have been wards of the State or under guardianship of the State or have been resident, as a child, in a Queensland institution."*

(Deed of Trust, Queensland Government and The Public Trustee of Queensland, the document which governs the Forde Foundation and its Board of Advice.)

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Establishing the Forde Foundation was one of the government's responses to recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions, better known as The Forde Inquiry.

The Queensland Government has contributed \$4.15 million to the Forde Foundation's Trust Fund since its inception. The income generated from the investment of this capital by The Public Trustee is distributed via a grants process to both individuals and to NGOs who support care leavers and, in particular, Forgotten Australians.

Grant applications are assessed by the Forde Foundation Board of Advice but paid by The Public Trustee upon the Board's recommendations.

The grants are a way of acknowledging the disadvantages many care leavers have had to overcome as a result of their childhood experiences, particularly the effects on education, employment, health and general wellbeing.

More information about the Forde Foundation can be found at <http://fordefoundation.org.au/about/forde-foundation>.

The average age of people registered with the Forde Foundation is 56 years, but many are well into their 70s and 80s.

### **Issues experienced by Forgotten Australians as they age**

We know that people who seek grants through the Forde Foundation have experienced difficulties during their childhood, through their family situations and during their time in care, including lower levels of education, lack of health and dental care, and lack of social connections and supports.

For some people this has contributed to substance misuse, family dysfunction, mental health concerns and unstable employment and housing. We know that as this group is ageing, they experience complex health needs, low financial means, and lack of connection to community and support networks.

This impacts on their experiences as they move into the aged care system, potentially facing re-institutionalisation into residential care, and that this brings particular difficulties for this group.

We often receive applications from care leavers for supports which they should be able to access in the aged care or health systems, including for medical aids, dental and pharmaceutical expenses. In many cases, we know that the person's support needs are much greater than what can be met by the limited scope of the Forde Foundation and we learn that the person has not accessed the aged care system.

We submit that the Royal Commission should explore issues that are unique to this group. This includes:

- whether current models of residential care are appropriate for this cohort and how to overcome the difficulties they face in an institutional setting, particularly for those who experienced abuse and neglect in care as children
- how to meet the complex needs of this group, given their lifelong social, educational and health disadvantage, including nutrition, allied health supports and mental health supports
- recognising the special needs of this group and therefore providing specialised funding and supports
- the need to train the workforce to understand and meet the needs of this group
- understanding and removing barriers to accessing the aged care system

We would be happy to expand further on these issues to support the Commission in its important work.

Yours sincerely

**Rob Ryan**

Chair

Forde Foundation Board of Advice

cc Public Trustee of Queensland

cc Director-General, Queensland Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women