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Rocking the Boat: The Hay Gaol Museum and the Disruptive Narratives of Forgotten Australians

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We've done the best we can for a little town that just wants to do right by everybody. We don't want to rock the boat.

—Jeni Japp, Chair, Hay Gaol Museum Committee (2015)

The officers left their morals out the front when they walked in that door!

—Diane Chard, former inmate, Hay Institute for Girls (2015)

At 8:00 p.m. on a summer's night, I am seated at the front bar of the local pub, in the New South Wales' town of Hay, having driven five hours from Canberra, Australia's capital city. Hay is situated on the land of the Nari-Nari people, has a population of approximately 3000, and is located on a flat, treeless saltbush plain at the crossroads where the Sturt, Mid-Western, and Cobb Highways meet. Many road travelers stop in Hay on their way to or from Adelaide, South Australia, but I am not passing through. Hay is my destination. Tomorrow morning, Hay residents will gather on the site of the former Hay Gaol, now

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a museum, to celebrate Australia Day.¹ I want to witness how this commemorative event is conducted on a former prison site. Tomorrow's temperature is expected to be 28 °C. The locals, who are used to hot summers, complain to me over their drinks, "It'll be cold tomorrow." I note their affability, but I also think that they are a tough bunch to have such tolerance of the heat. Hay is known for its wool, beef cattle, crops, and its brutal carceral history. It is a town that also hosts five museums.

Shear Outback: The Australian Shearers' Hall of Fame, prominently located on the junction of Sturt and Cobb Highways, was opened in 2002, and features exhibition galleries and a working wool shed. Shear Outback is the most popular museum destination in Hay, having attracted 13,000 visitors in 2014. In the same year, *Bishop's Lodge Historic House* had 2000 visitors and is the former residence of the Anglican Bishop of the Riverina (Visitor Information Centre 2015). Hay's memorial to the 103 townspeople who did not return from service during World War I is its high school, which opened in 1923. The Hay War Memorial High School Museum, which does not record its visitor numbers, preserves and exhibits artifacts and narratives of those who served.

Hay also has two museums that represent the town's difficult history as a site of incarceration. In 2014, the Dunera Museum recorded 3400 visitors located at the Hay Railway Station. The museum exhibits the narratives of those who were incarcerated in the three Hay camps during World War II. The National Security Act during World War II enabled the Australian Government to intern anyone whose loyalty to the nation was suspect. The camps at Hay imprisoned "enemy aliens," including German, Italian, and Japanese Australians (Rando 2005: 20). The camps also held prisoners of war, as well as most of the 2500 German or Austrian refugees who had fled from Nazi oppression only to endure abuse by British guards on board the HMT Dunera that sailed from Liverpool, United Kingdom. On arrival in Sydney, Australia, they were transported to a dusty plain on the outskirts of Hay and cast behind barbed wire (Inglis 2010: 49; Rando 2005: 21). The Hay Gaol Museum opened in 1976 and unlike the Dunera Museum, operates on the site of former imprisonment. It was not only adult males who were incarcerated here. Adolescent girls were also locked up when the gaol became the Hay Institute for Girls from 1961 to 1974. The Hay Gaol

¹ Australia Day is celebrated annually on 26 January and marks the anniversary of the 1788 arrival of the first fleet of British ships at Port Jackson, New South Wales. Indigenous Australian leader and campaigner Professor Mick Dodson AM notes that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people refer to the anniversary date as "invasion day," and has argued that this date of national celebration should be changed (Smiles 2009).

Museum attracted 5000 visitors in 2014 (Visitor Information Centre 2015), thus demonstrating its status as one of the most popular museums in the town.

Tourism has become an important industry for the inland town of Hay. Generally, throughout inland Australia, the effect of neoliberal policies has resulted in the withdrawal of services from the bush and subsequent job losses, which in turn have seen young people moving from inland rural towns. Rural unemployment is higher than in urban Australia. Social capital, exemplified by sporting clubs and community groups, provide a crucial antidote to helping inland rural communities deal with the loss of family members and/or property. However, social capital alone cannot redress the need for thriving economic capital (Alston 2002). Specifically, Hay Shire Council notes Hay's declining population (Hay Shire Council 2010a: 10) and the negative effect of climate change on farming (Hay Shire Council 2010a: 14). The median individual income in this town is below both state and national averages (Hay Shire Council 2010a: 12). This is contrasted by a burgeoning tourism industry that is well-acknowledged by residents.² The Shire's long-term economic goal is for the town to become a nationally recognized tourist destination. In 2007, Tourism Australia estimated that Hay had attracted 79,000 overnight visitors and the town's museums are included in the Shire's publicized main attractions (Hay Shire Council 2010a: 13–18). A survey conducted, in 2009, by the Shire Council, found that 59 percent of Hay visitors stated that they intended to visit Hay's museums during their stopover (Hay Shire Council 2010b: 73). Hay accommodation operators have also reported that some guests state that they travelled to Hay specifically to visit the Gaol Museum (Hay Shire Council 2010b: 48).

The Hay Gaol, built in 1879, operated as a gaol from 1880 until its closure in 1915. The building was unused for a few years. In 1920, it became a maternity home until a new maternity unit was built in Hay in 1930. In that same year, the building was used as a prison again for six months (Donnison 1976: 5–7) and then became the Lock Hospital for the Insane. During World War II it was used as a prisoner of war (POW) camp. The building was also used as emergency accommodation for those who were displaced by floods in 1952 and 1956 (Donnison 1976: 10–11). In 1961, the Gaol became the infamous Hay Institute for Girls, a maximum-security complex established as a response to the riots at the Parramatta Training School for Girls in Sydney, approximately 700 km away. But for all these functions, it is the

² A community survey found that 85 percent of people in Hay believed that tourism is significant to the town's growth (Hay Shire Council 2010a: 6).

Gaol's association with the town's carceral history that holds the most fascination. As well-known Australian radio broadcaster Phillip Adams notes, "There is something about Hay. It was the site of Australia's first concentration camp" (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2008).

Hay's use as a carceral dumping ground for the unwanted can be explained by Jungian scholar David Tacey (1995: 80), who argues that, in Australia, negative projections comprise any characteristics that do not comply with the exaggerated masculinity of the Australian consciousness and so Aboriginal people, women, individualists, and foreigners are cast out into the harsh landscape that too threatens the superiority of a constructed machismo. And so convict settlements were established in remote Port Arthur and on Norfolk Island. In Australia's contemporary history, Port Hedland, in the northwest of Western Australia, was a quarantine station. The outback town of Woomera in South Australia, in addition to the location of a military testing range, also had an immigration detention center (Bashford and Strange 2002: 513). The claims of asylum seekers who arrive in Australia by boat are processed offshore (Fleay and Hoffman 2014: 1). Out of sight. Out of mind. In this fierce psychological, geo-political economy the outback town of Hay, like similar remote locations before and after, was rendered a site of banishment. In this town, the "undesirables" were foreign Australian nationals and, later, noncompliant teenage girls. In this repeated narrative of expulsion, the process of civilization is not characterized by the absence of violence, but instead by the concealment of whatever seems unpleasant or inappropriate, although isolation and separation are, in themselves, forms of violence (Martschukat and Niedermeier 2013: 7–9).

Parramatta Girls Training Home and the Hay Institute for Girls were two institutions, among over 900 orphanages, homes, and other "care" facilities for children in Australia in the twentieth century (Find & Connect no date a). It is estimated that at least 500,000 children experienced life in this out-of-home "care" system (Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee 2004: xv). Of the estimated 500,000 children who experienced institutionalized "care" in Australia in the twentieth century, approximately 50,000 were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children who are known as the "Stolen Generations" and 7000 were Child Migrants from Britain or Malta. However, there is little acknowledgement that the vast majority of institutionalized children were domestic-Australian, non-Indigenous children, known as the "Forgotten Australians" or "Care Leavers." It is suggested that Australia has the highest rate of institutionalization of children in the world (Chamley 2012). This practice was part of a much wider system in which welfare policy and institutionalized punishment were

inextricably intertwined. Kerry Carrington (2009: 2) coins the term “penal welfarism” to describe the “. . . punishment of children for non-criminal conduct under status or welfare offences, such as being uncontrollable or exposed to moral danger, permitted the criminalization of immorality, poverty and cultural differences.”

Australian penal welfarism has its roots in the nation’s convict past. On board the 11 ships that comprised First Fleet, which sailed from Great Britain to establish the first European settlement in Australia, were three unaccompanied convict children and 13 children who travelled with their convict mothers (Holden 2000: 3–4). Fifteen percent of all convicts transported to Australia between 1788 and 1868 were aged 18 or under (Kociumbas 1997: 21). In the late eighteenth century, three quarters of the women and children in the colony of New South Wales were supported by the government because many of the children born of convicts were illegitimate and their single mothers worked in domestic service, thus unable to be present for their children. Later, the NSW Industrial Schools Act of 1886 enabled the establishment of government-run institutions and the removal of destitute children found begging or loitering on the streets by police (Carrington 2009: 15). The Act enabled the establishment of Parramatta Girls Industrial School in 1887, which became the Parramatta Girls Training Home in 1912 and Parramatta Girls Training School in 1946 (Find & Connect, no date a).

Child welfare policy was intertwined with penal correction and exacerbated by extended terms of institutionalization of children. This practice was informed by the belief that the state should take over the parental role of destitute children (Carrington 2009: 17). Reformatories and industrial schools were meant to reform children through discipline including corporal punishment, regimentation, and labor. Even though these institutions were established so that they were separate from the prison system, in practice, they were as harsh as adult prisons. In some instances, these institutions for children were more severe than adult prisons (Carrington 2009: 15–17). For example, the Hay Institution for Girls in the 1960s enforced the “silent system,” which had hitherto been banned in adult prisons in the nineteenth century (Ashton and Wilson 2014: xi). In 1858 provisions enabled a court to place children in an institution without parental consent (Carrington 2009: 18). This intersection of welfare and punishment endured well into the twentieth century. Children in orphanages were susceptible to incarceration in detention centers even if they had not committed a crime. Leonie Sheedy, the CEO of the Care Leavers of Australasia Network, recalls her own childhood experience, “The biggest threat at St Catherine’s, if

you were playing up, was, ‘You’ll be off to the Good Shepherd’s or you’ll be off to Winlaton! Our ‘brothers’ and ‘sisters’ ended up in these hell holes’” (Sheedy 2015).³ Section 72 of the New South Wales Child Welfare Act 1939 enabled police officers or government welfare officers to pick up girls and send them to court for “falling into bad associations or . . . exposed to moral danger.”

Diane Chard was sent to Parramatta Girls Training School after being charged with “exposure to moral danger.” In 1963, at the age of 15, Diane was picked up by the police for wearing a miniskirt. Diane’s family had hitherto been the subject of police surveillance:

My father was a drunk and used to go up to the local shops and jump out of the back of the van with his mates with rifles and tell all the boys to leave the shops because his daughters had to go up there. This brought attention to our family and so the police watched us. The police hated my family and they hated me. I loved fashion. Hemlines moved up. When I wore a skirt that showed part of my knees, that’s when the police grabbed me. They took me to the Civic [Canberra] police station, put me in front of a mirror and said, “Look at you—you’re exposing yourself to moral danger!” (Chard 2015)

Diane was then taken to the Red Hill shelter and then to a court hearing where she was charged with being exposed to moral danger and sentenced to Parramatta Girls Training School until she was 18 years of age. Diane was transferred to Hay after being placed in isolation at Parramatta, “They kicked the shit out of me. They kicked every part of my body. I was knocked unconscious. I’ve always had trouble with my ears ever since they bashed me” (Chard 2015). Diane was then transported to Hay by train, chained to a chair and forced to take Largactil, an antipsychotic drug. To this day, Diane has nightmares about the train journey and cannot sleep without the aid of medication. “I arrived at Hay, black and blue with congealed blood” (Chard 2015).

Parramatta Girls Training School and, its maximum-security adjunct, the Hay Institution for Girls were one of many institutions that were the subjects of the Australian Senate Inquiry in Institutional Care in 2003 and the

³ Winlaton Juvenile School was a state-run institution, established in 1956, in Melbourne, by the Children’s Welfare Department for “delinquent” girls (Find & Connect no date b). The Good Shepherd Sisters ran eight Magdalene laundries in Australia. Hundreds of young women were incarcerated by the Good Shepherd Sisters, throughout the twentieth century and forced to work, without pay, in the Sisters’ commercial laundries. Many of these young women had not committed a crime and were not afforded a legal trial (Chynoweth 2014b: 176–179).

current Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The Senate Inquiry noted that the Hay Institution for Girls was established to replicate the Tamworth Institution, which, too, had been set up in a colonial prison in New South Wales for boys who had absconded from Gosford Farm Home (Senate Community Affairs References Committee 2004: 148, 55). Hay Institution was not an aberration, then, but one institution in a system of youth detention centers, across Australia and through decades, which violated the rights of children by blurring the boundaries between “care” and correctional services. The Hay Institution for Girls could simultaneously house 12 so-called “difficult and rebellious” girls on the recommendation of the Superintendent of Parramatta Girls, subject to approval from the then Minister for Child Welfare (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses into Child Sexual Abuse 2014: 8).⁴ Former prisoners have testified that they were sent to Hay, not for breaking any rules at Parramatta, but for asserting themselves or confronting male staff who physically attacked them (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses into Child Sexual Abuse 2014: 8; Chard 2015; Robb 2015).

The experience at Hay was even more sadistic than that at Parramatta. The Senate Inquiry found consistent themes from testimonies of former prisoners from Hay: “. . . [G]irls were drugged when taken there, made to scrub paint work from walls and undertake tasks that were beyond their capacities and were deprived of food and subjected to many harsh punishments” (Senate Community Affairs References Committee 2004: 56–57). Women recounted being bashed, raped, having to show their soiled sanitation pads before being issued clean replacements, forced to labor outside in extreme heat, digging with pick and shovels (Senate Community Affairs References Committee 2004: 148, 57).

These narratives of extreme trauma, as crucial as they are to our understanding of punitive welfarism, gloss over the fundamentals of neglect. Even if acts of rape and torture were absent at the Hay Institute for Girls, brutality would have remained in the denial of liberty despite girls not having committed a crime, the lack of education, the refusal of socialization and recreation. The fact that the most fundamental elements supporting adolescent development were refused by politicians and officers at Hay is vicious enough. The reality that rape and torture was added to this deprivation renders this realization of welfare policy particularly heinous.

⁴This protocol was not always followed, however. The records of former prisoner Wilma Robb show that the welfare department had not authorized her transfer to Hay until nine days after she had already been sent there (Robb 2015).

In July 1973, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation as part of its current affairs television program *This Day Tonight* featured a damning exposé of Parramatta Girls Training Home and Hay Institute for Girls. The program prompted protests at Parramatta, which resulted in the New South Wales' Minister for Child Welfare announcing the closure of Parramatta Girls and the Hay Institute in April 1974. In 2011, former prisoners nominated the Parramatta site for consideration for the National Heritage List (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses into Child Sexual Abuse 2014: 9). In 1976, the Department of Corrective Services of New South Wales decommissioned the Hay Gaol and gave the building to the Shire of Hay.

Local community members formed a committee and established a museum in the building to display the town's memorabilia. There is very little space on site dedicated to its previous function as a site of incarceration. Most of the cells within the Museum, with the exception of one, functions as display storage. One cell is packed with historical telecommunications equipment, another with objects related to music, another with historical clothing. There are honor boards and military paraphernalia. Outside, the cellblock is a large collection of farming equipment with several motor vehicles with no historical interpretation. There is no displayed narrative near the one enclosed van on site that was used to transport Parramatta girls from the Narrandera railway station to the Hay Gaol (Fig. 15.1). That journey of 338 km for a teenage girl must have been a long ordeal but such historical imagining is not assisted by the curatorial approach at the Museum that renders this vehicle insignificant. The current Chair of the Hay Gaol Museum Committee, who has been a member of that Committee since its inception, explains why the emphasis on other non-Gaol-related objects:

We had nowhere to store all the memorabilia that had been collected by quite a few of the townspeople and so that's how the idea of a museum came about. Nobody ever said anything about the girls. Nobody ever said anything about what the building had been used for. All the memorabilia was important. We placed very little emphasis on what had happened to the girls. We set aside one cell which looks as it did back then and we left the "stand alone" isolation cell as it was. (Japp 2015)

This curatorial decision does not sit well with many Care Leavers. For example, Caroline Carroll, the Chair of the Alliance for Forgotten Australians, visited the Museum in the late 1970s:



Fig. 15.1 Photograph by Adele Chynoweth of the prison van used to transport girls from the Narrandera railway station to the Hay Institute for Girls, which is on display at the Hay Gaol Museum without any sign or text panel to distinguish it from other large outdoor exhibits

When I went there the host on site mentioned the prison but they never, not once, mentioned the girls who were in Hay. I talked about the girls and then they talked about them but in derogatory terms saying they were “down and out.” I remember feeling outraged because I knew girls from Lynwood Hall who ended up in Parramatta Girls Home and then Hay and they were far from evil, vile creatures. (Carroll 2015)⁵

When ex-Hay prisoner Wilma Robb visited the Museum in 1982, the only reference to its former use as a site of incarceration for teenage girls was a booklet concerning the history of the site (Donnison 1976). Ex-Hay prisoner, Diane Chard, visited the Museum in 1986, so, as she explained, “I could open my eyes and look because when I was locked up there, I had my eyes down all the time.” The caretaker told Diane that it was for the “really-bad girls” and it was the “best place.” Diane’s husband retorted, “Don’t say

⁵ Lynwood Hall, in Sydney, was built in 1891 as private residence and was leased to the New South Wales Government in 1917 as a school for truant. In 1936, it was established as a domestic school for female state wards (Find & Connect no date c).

that to her!” Diane told the caretaker, “Nobody would say that this was the ‘best place!’ This was a cruel, sadistic, horrible, horrible place and it’s never left my head and I was in here twice!” The caretaker presented Diane with a bottle of wine as a peace offering, but that did not assuage Diane’s disappointment, “It should look like a gaol. It should show the reason why the building was put there. It’s just somewhere to put everybody’s junk. It was actually a gaol. They should put it back the way it was” (Chard 2015).

A former ward of the state, who does not wish to be identified, and, so, for the sake of this discussion is given the pseudonym “Tracy,” visited the Hay Gaol Museum in January 2003 to undertake history field research as part of her postgraduate studies. “Tracy” described her response to the Museum:

I left Hay feeling incredibly angry. There was no professional interpretation of any kind and the woman who was at the site on the day came across as a kind of “do-gooder,” saying that the girls had a “good time here,” that they ‘liked it’ here and that there were “no problems.” I knew the site had a violent history because wards of the state in the 1980s know or know of each other and there was a lot of talk about Hay as a really brutal place.

When I went into the Museum, and saw that there was a bridal doll on display, and the woman who was on duty that day was particularly positive about this doll, and went to some length to explain to me that the girls were saved from boredom by being able to dress dolls like this, and have these dolls as a kind of role model for how they might want to conduct their own lives, just seemed to me to be so incredibly ridiculous that such an item would sum up the ethos of the place. It’s completely fucked!⁶

There was a complete absence of voices from the women incarcerated there. It has become a dumping ground for heritage objects—a storage facility, come-museum site—as though any history would become self-evident. But they don’t care about the girls who were in there. In fact, you’re left with the impression that the girls get in the way of the locals’ preferred version of history. (Tracy 2015)

The Hay Gaol Museum’s previous polite and token representation of the history of the Hay Institute for Girls was disrupted by external developments in Australian government policy. In 2004, the Australian Government released its third in a trilogy of reports concerning Australians in who experienced institutional “care” as children. *Bringing them Home* (1997) concerned the Stolen Generations. *Lost Innocents* (2001) followed the

⁶The activity of dressing dolls was only introduced in the few years prior to the closure of the Hay Institute in 1974 (Robb 2015).

Senate Inquiry into child migration. The third report *Forgotten Australians* (2004) concerned the majority (88 percent) of Australians who were institutionalized as children—domestic, non-Indigenous children. This Inquiry was the result of intense lobbying from the Care Leavers of Australasia Network and Broken Rites Australia, thus an outcome that “is a product of the people who agitated for that—people who had been in orphanages. It’s a grass roots movement. It doesn’t come from the universities. It comes right from below” (Tracy 2015).

Wilma Robb, who had been in and out of children’s Homes since the age of five, was sent to Parramatta Girls Training Home when she was 14 and, subsequently, to Hay Institute for Girls (Robb 2015). It was not until the Senate Inquiry into Forgotten Australians that Wilma chose to speak out about her experiences of childhood abuse in institutions, “I never learned to talk [about abuse] until the Senate Inquiry. My voice . . . could never come out my mouth because I got punished” (interviewed by Young 2011).

Robb not only summoned up the courage to present her testimony to the Inquiry. In 2004, she also confronted the Hay Gaol Committee because she wanted the errors in Dennison’s pamphlet to be corrected and the narratives of former teenage prisoners to be represented in the Museum.⁷ Wilma submitted her written accounts of her experience of imprisonment. Wilma was then invited to speak to visitors to the Museum. In 2007, Tertia Butcher, the editor of the local newspaper the *Riverine Grazier* and founder of the group Women about Hay, organized a reunion of the Hay Institute for Girls, to celebrate International Women’s Day. Tertia had previously observed former prisoners who had visited the Gaol Museum with members of their families, “I thought they had faced their demons and were on the road to healing . . . I thought it be good if more of those girls could experience that” (Butcher 2015). The reunion was held at the Museum and was well attended as all Hay residents had been invited (Butcher 2015). Women about Hay also funded the publication of a collection of narratives of former prisoners (Djuric 2008).

The success of the reunion noted especially its intergenerational significance. Survivors’ adult children attended with their mothers and met each other. This assisted their understanding of what their mothers had endured when they were children. The reunion also enabled local residents to speak of their recollections of the Hay Institute. Some residents spoke of the girls’ screams that they heard which they reported to the police, only to be told

⁷ Dennison’s (1976: 13) inaccurate assertions include, “[n]o girl under fifteen years of age was sent to Hay,” “no girl stayed longer than three months” and “no girl ever returned to Hay.”

that it was beyond the police's power to act of reports because the Hay Institute was a government facility (Robb 2015). At the reunion, a memorial plaque was on site unveiled, which read, "Dedicated to the girls 13–18 years of age who were incarcerated here 1961–1974 by the NSW Department of Child Welfare. Hay Girls Reunion, 3–4 March 2007. Forgotten Australians. 'Let no child walk this path again'."

Senator Andrew Murray, a former Child Migrant and a member of the Senate Community Affairs References Committee that conducted the inquiry into Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers, presented a moving speech at the reunion (Chard 2015; Robb 2015). Wilma, in addition to acknowledging the significance of the reunion for survivors, believes that the event would have increased tourism in the town of Hay, "This was getting Hay on the map. Hay got a Federal politician . . . to travel to Hay. Andrew's speech was powerful. It got media attention" (Robb 2015). In 2008, Outback Theatre for Young People, commissioned a play about Hay Institute for Girls, *Eyes to the Floor* written by Alana Valentine and performed at the Hay Gaol Museum.

These developments in the Museum, after the third Senate Inquiry, which have given a voice to Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers, are mainly limited to the temporal and performative—a reunion, Wilma Robb's one-off interaction with visitors, a performance by members of the local youth theater, and the offering of a bottle of wine to a former prisoner. Currently, any paralleled exhibited experiences in the Museum comprise a quotation from the Senate Inquiry on a quilt hanging in the entrance hall which also makes mention of the site as a colonial gaol, maternity hospital, insane asylum, and POW camp. There are also two cells in the main building, one displaying POW memorabilia and another set up as it was in the early 1970s as the Hay Institute for Girls with the full audio recording of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation radio program *Exposed to Moral Danger* (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2009) that can be heard on the touch of a button, but assumes that visitors will stand by a speaker and listen to a one-hour broadcast in its entirety. The isolation cell outside the main block is also set up, presumably, as it was during the years of the Hay Institute, but some survivors note that the inclusion of a bed is misleading as they recall having to sleep on the cement floor (Robb 2015; Chard 2015). There is, too, the small memorial plaque in the rose garden on site. These inclusions may be perceived as a reasonable, inclusive, exhibited inventory of a difficult, local carceral history. Other visitor feedback, too, is supportive of the Hay Gaol Committee's curatorial decisions. *TripAdvisor*, an international travel website, ranks the Hay Gaol Museum as number two out of "8 things

to do in Hay” (TripAdvisor 2013–2015). All the 23 reviews of the Museum, published by *TripAdvisor*, are positive and demonstrate an understanding of the site as site of cruel incarceration (TripAdvisor 2013–2015). It could be argued that the recent revisions provide an adequate acknowledgment of the site’s prison history.

It is not unusual for local community groups to use decommissioned prisons for the public display of objects unrelated to the site’s history. The 1884 Lumpkin County Jail and Museum in Georgia, USA, for example, displays noncarceral, domestic items from the nineteenth century (Lumpkin County Historical Society no date). Similarly, the Victoria County Historical Society in Ontario, Canada, has established the Olde Gaol Museum in the former Lindsay Jail. The Museum features the collections of famous local residents, as well as memorabilia from World War I and World War II (Walby and Piché 2015: 96–97).

However, there are museums throughout the world, situated in decommissioned prisons that, instead, are based on “carceral retasking” which refers “to the act of turning a decommissioned penitentiary, prison, jail, or lock-up into another enterprise that continues to reproduce imprisonment as a dominant idea and/or material practice” (Ferguson et al 2014: 83–84). The Township of Springwater Heritage Committee has chosen a sparse aesthetic with very few displays in the former Hillsdale Lockup. Similarly, the Huron Historic Jail Society, also in Ontario, Canada, has aimed to represent an authentic history of the prison and has emphasized the significance of the building itself, along with separate artifacts (Walby and Piché 2015: 99).

Within the professional museum sector, the Welfare Museum, in the former poorhouse in Svendborg, Denmark, exemplifies a curatorial purpose informed by the history of the site and an understanding of the notion of punitive welfarism. The building was established in 1872 and until 1974, its prisoners were the “undeserving” poor. In response to this history, the Welfare Museum displays objects, and staff undertake extensive research relating to historical and current welfare policies, emphasizing the experiences of Care Leavers (Rytter and Knage Rasmussen 2015: 10).

The work of the Welfare Museum in Denmark, as well as that of the Springwater Heritage Committee and the Huron Historic Jail Society in Canada, does more than simply exemplify an alternative curatorial practice to that of the Hay Gaol Committee in Australia. These approaches also serve as a reminder of the importance of authenticity in relation to heritage practice. Authenticity is not only an attribute of cultural attraction of heritage.

Authenticity also has a broader purview than tangible elements as it also concerns subjective responses and experiences to sites and events (Ivanovic citing Jamal and Hill 2008: 120). Therefore, the display of those objects within the Hay Gaol Museum that do not relate to history of the site in addition to the limited references to the experiential narratives of former prisoners compromise the authenticity of the Hay Gaol Museum.

The conflict within the Hay Gaol Museum, therefore, is located in the tension between the site's former function as a prison and an exhibited emphasis on settler history, evident in the plethora of farming equipment, honor boards, and memorabilia that connotes, through objects alone, in the absence of a displayed interpretative narrative, a preference for the Hay's status as an industrious, farming community. There is little disclosure that not all who lived in Hay were afforded participation in the dominant, constructed, settler narrative:

[C]hildren were for many reasons hidden in institutions and forgotten by society when they were placed in care and again when they were released into the "outside" world. One person referred to "the carpet children" as in swept under. These people who spent part or all of their childhood in an institution, children's home or out-of-home care background have been the forgotten Australians. Until now. It is now time for all Australians to recognize and acknowledge the painful and haunting experiences and memories of this vast number of fellow Australians. (Senate Community Affairs References Committee 2004: 6)

In addition, any representation of the history of Hay Institute for Girls, devoid of a national policy context which saw the establishment of similar "gaols" for children, encourages visitors to view the site as some perverse, institutional deviation. Further, any attempt to recognize such "painful and haunting experiences" is seemingly subject to systematized obstacles in Australia. There is anecdotal evidence that suggests that most Australians have little understanding of Forgotten Australians or Care Leavers (Watson 2011; Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee 2004). This broad indication is paralleled within Australian universities. Forty percent of Australian academics, in the fields of social sciences and humanities, who responded to a survey about Forgotten Australians, stated that they had no knowledge of the terms "Forgotten Australians" or "Care Leavers." An additional 30 percent of respondents to the same survey demonstrated misunderstanding of these terms, defining their interpretation as either returned Australian soldiers, Indigenous Australians, Child Migrants only, those assisted by a carer or referring to Australians, generally, whose

achievements were unacknowledged (Chynoweth 2015).⁸ Senior fellow from the University of Melbourne, June Factor (2015), speciously writes, “It is only since 1992 that Australian governments have detained children against whom there is no suggestion of criminality.” Factor, in her attempt to provide a much needed link between the plight of convict children and the current detention of children of asylum seekers, omits an entire century of incarceration of thousands of innocent children in Australia. In 2011, Australia’s then Federal Education Minister, Peter Garrett, dismissed former Senator Andrew Murray’s recommendation that the topic of Forgotten Australians be mandated in the Australian Curriculum in History (Wilson 2013: 90).

When Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers are recognized, it is often so that their claim to survivor status can be dismissed. In November 2009, during the week of the National Apology to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants, television satirists John Clarke and Brian Dawe suggested that Telstra shareholders, supporters of the Collingwood football team, and viewers of the police drama *The Bill* should also get an apology from the prime minister because they too have “suffered” and their “lives are ruined” (ABC, 2009). Cultural historian Kelly Jean Butler, in her discussion of stories of suffering and abuse in Australia, states that she is “troubled by the adoption of the term ‘Forgotten Australians’ to highlight the suffering of settler Australians . . . of white children” (Butler 2013: 251–252, emphasis added). Here, Butler evokes a colonial framework in which to position the narratives of Forgotten Australians, a context of opposition to the needs of Indigenous Australians.

This discounting of the legitimacy of the history of Forgotten Australians supports the view that some human subjects are more “grievable” than others and that race is invoked as the “most powerful marker of difference that establishes and reinforces mechanism of inclusion and exclusion with regard to, for instance, migration politics, social politics, punishment, or the ascribed legitimacy of warfare” (Martschukat and Niedermeier, 2013: 12–13). As non-Indigenous, domestic Australians, the Forgotten Australians are unable to apply

⁸The survey comprised a series of ten questions that were logically sequenced, thus some questions depended on responses from previous questions. The aim of the survey was to determine the degree of familiarity of academics within the humanities and social sciences with the notion of “Forgotten Australians” and “Care Leavers,” and the nature of any associated research, if applicable. Potential respondents were contacted by email. Survey participation was made available via “SurveyMonkey,” was voluntary, and the identity of respondents was anonymous. There were 114 respondents from June to August 2015.

the social marker of racial otherness, which may account for the discounting of their victim status.

It is not that there is a complete absence of public history initiatives about Forgotten Australians. For example, in 2005, the Howard Government committed funding to states and territories for the constructions of memorials commemorating Care Leavers (Australian Government 2005: 17). In 2009, the Rudd Government commissioned an exhibition at the National Museum of Australia, after the Museum had, since 2004, resisted lobbying for such an initiative from the Care Leavers of Australasia Network (Chynoweth 2014a). However, such programs have seemingly failed to result in an associated chapter of understanding in Australia's consensus version of history. Further, other government policies, which aim to address the needs of Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers, are administered through welfare and social services departments, and subsequent funding is, by and large, appropriated to government welfare departments and nongovernment organizations, dominated by the field of social work. Many of these funding recipients are revamped incarnations of establishments that provided institutionalized "care" for children. It is cruel irony that such past providers should receive further funding to determine how, and if, Care Leavers can access their personal records and shared heritage. This policy decision and the associated machinery of government, both symbolically and professionally, denote a privatization of this history, structured gatekeeping endorsed by government, a refusal of the necessary rigor that arts, heritage, and education professionals, for example, could bring to this subject in order to create a robust, comprehensive, meaningful, and socially-just public narrative.

One can understand, then, why the Hay Gaol Museum provokes such strong reactions from Forgotten Australians. The Museum is a potential flagship in a much needed cultural fleet. However, the only voices of Care Leavers in the Museum are those cited by the Australian Senate and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, both established and respected organizations within the Australian hegemony. Any direct, unfiltered testimony from survivors themselves is limited to the performative and to, as Tertia Butcher (2015) describes, the role of "healing." In this way, memory is not worthy of a place in history. Memory's worth is as a therapeutic tool. "History" denotes objective scholarship, whereas "memory" is perceived as subjective and fallible, devoid of evidence (MacDonald 2013: 13).

Further, the positioning of personal memories solely within the bounds of healing discourse may prevent communities addressing their responsibility in changing the vices of the past. Cultural scholars Jane Goodall and Christopher Lee in their discussion of "posttraumatic stress disorder"

acknowledge that its clinical recognition has led to necessary treatment and support services. However, they argue that this framing of trauma as individualized illness rather than as a consequence of an external event results in the privatization of trauma that “threatens to constrain a liberal exchange amongst the people, which is itself understood as an imperative of personal, social, civic and political hygiene” (Goodall and Lee 2015: 5). Single events such as the Hay Girls Reunion and the associated unveiling of a memorial plaque may not assist a community in coming to terms with a difficult history if informed by an expectation that everyone should move on.

Wilma Robb (2015) grieves the absence of an ongoing relationship between the Hay Gaol Committee and the Hay Institute survivors, which, if established, could support ongoing research, and sourcing of further material and narratives for representation in the museum. For example, Robb notes that some archival material concerning Hay has only recently been discovered and made available. This, she argues, should be of interest to the Hay Gaol Committee (Robb 2015). Robb’s observation is supported by the view of David Fleming (2012: 80), Director of National Museums Liverpool and President of the Federation of International Human Rights Museums, “There is little value in doing one-off events or one-off projects. Working towards social justice takes time and effort, which is why it requires commitment, determination and belief.” In addition, Joanna Besley (2009: 60–61) in her analysis of over 20 museums throughout the world that assist communities in recovering from traumatic events and experiences, concludes that Australian museums have ignored their potential as agents of social change and that those in work in museums need to learn skills in working “sensitively and effectively with people who have experienced trauma,” that the associated relationships must be “continually nurtured,” and that “[p]eople, not objects, are at the centre of this type of practice.”

Jeni Japp (2015), the Chair of the Hay Gaol Committee, explains her reasoning for the current layout of the Museum:

We’ve done the best we can. We’re in a tiny town. I’ve never had anybody write to me about the objects. It’s a decision we made early on. We knew it wouldn’t be a happy decision but we felt that one cell looking as it should—should be OK. We did take on board that it wouldn’t be OK for some of the women. Some of the committee didn’t want to tell the story at all. They said there are better stories about the Gaol being the home for flood victims. But a gaol’s a gaol. So we’ve got to tell a story but we can’t have it as a monument to that terrible, terrible time of those girls’ lives. It’s just logistics. We need somewhere to put those objects. We had no money. We were given this

huge place and we didn't want it to be just a memorial to ten years of terrible things. The community knew nothing really and nobody wanted to delve into it. But we couldn't wait to get the [memorial] plaque up. Hay was a funny sort of a town.

Japp notes the lack of financial resources. However, it is willpower, not budgets, that determines an inclusive museum practice. Museologist Richard Sandell argues that all museums can contribute to greater social equity regardless of their resources and the context in which they operate (cited by Varutti, 2012: 244). Japp's observation that no one has formally complained about the layout of the Hay Gaol Museum may imply an expectation that curatorial responsibility for a socially inclusive museum rests with external advocates, a suggestion not shared by David Fleming (2012: 82, original emphasis):

Working towards social justice is a long-term commitment; it requires determination and bloody mindedness. It needs to be driven by passion, by a belief that everyone deserves equal access to what we do in museums and not just because government (or anyone else) tells us this is what we should do, but because *it's the right thing to do*.

Nevertheless, Hay Shire's Tourism Development Plan already notes that the Hay Gaol Museum should emphasize the narratives of internment, and not local artifacts and memorabilia (2010b: 15). This objective has yet to be realized.

It is 8:00 a.m. on Australia Day and brightly colored banners adorn the entrance to the Hay Gaol Museum (Fig. 15.2). Volunteers cheerfully cook breakfast on a large barbecue for approximately 200 participants who are seated around outdoor tables. Local residents introduce themselves and I feel welcome. The formalities begin—introductions, speeches, and awards. I am moved by the breadth of achievement, particularly in relation to commitment to community, a dedication that is clearly intergenerational, and I note that Australian capital cities have much to learn from a shared civic pride and generosity as demonstrated here.

But on turning to watch the raising of the Australian flag my heart sinks. The flagpole is located outside the isolation cell. The honor guard stands on the path where Hay girls were forced to break up the concrete slab, only to repave it. There are no accompanying museum text panels to recount the significance of these locations, only a flag, which neither veils the image, in my mind, of the repetitive torturous task that broke both body and spirit nor



Fig. 15.2 2015 photograph by Adele Chynoweth of the entrance to the Hay Gaol Museum on Australia Day

muffles the screams that echo through history from that isolation cell. I empathize with residents who, amidst economic uncertainty and associated loss, want to build positive morale and a reputation other than that associated with historical imprisonment. But it is not the whole truth. I am reminded of sociologist Jacqueline Z. Wilson's (2008: 211) prescription for an Australian social memory that acknowledges its history of systematized confinement, "It is not a matter of pride, nor of shame . . . it is simply a matter of not forgetting."

I linger on the lawn after the residents have left, the barbecue has been cleaned, and the tables and chairs have been packed away. The caretaker allows me inside the back of the prison van. There, scratched in the back of the van are the initials, "ILWA"—the same letters that also mark the walls of Parramatta Girls Training School—the acronym for "I love, worship, adore," the secret code of kinship among the girls at Parramatta. The caretaker watches my every move. He is simply guarding heritage but, in so doing, I am denied a quiet moment of historical reflection. I emerge from the back of the van, worse for wear. However, it seems apt that my best frock is soiled with the dirt from the past. Even so, I brush away the cobwebs, while daring to assume that I may hope for a nation that will acknowledge its carceral history, all of it—convicts, prisoners of war, foreign nationals, the Stolen Generations, Care Leavers, Forgotten Australians, Child Migrants, adult migrants, asylum seekers—"not a matter of trends or fashions in identity" (Wilson 2008: 211). I wish that social services would open the gates on its confined history of Care Leavers and Forgotten Australians, a living heritage that needs to be informed by a breadth of academic disciplines, administered by whole-of-government initiatives and represented throughout a range of sectors. I seek a national acknowledgement of 83 inquiries, in Australia, from 1852 to 2013, into children's institutions (Swain 2014) and an admission that each review has been punctuated by a compulsion to forget. I wish for a country that can stand the heat of its difficult history and a gaol museum in Hay that can provide a straightforward, accessible fulfillment of Wilma Robb's (2015) simple imperative, "Left and right turn, two paces forward, hands down, no eye contact, no radio, six feet apart, the silent system. What was our crime? We didn't even go through court. That all needs to be there – the truth."⁹

⁹ While girls attended a court hearing, before being sentenced to Parramatta Girls Training School, even if they had not committed a crime, there was no additional court hearing for Parramatta girls who were sentenced to the Hay Institute for Girls.

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