

# Summary of findings of consultations with Queensland Forgotten Australians

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Volume 1

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## 1 Introduction

In 2010 The Department of Communities engaged RPR Consulting to conduct consultations with Forgotten Australians to contribute to their review of funded services for Forgotten Australians in the state. The consultations began with a series of six focus groups for Forgotten Australians conducted in July and August 2010 and facilitated by RPR Consulting. Focus groups were held in Brisbane (including in the suburb of Logan), as well as in Townsville and Rockhampton. In total 38 people attended the focus groups, 34 of whom were former residents and four who were support people (generally family members). 29 people attended one of the groups, five attended two focus groups and four people attended three of the focus groups.

Focus groups provided important information on the needs and views of a group of Forgotten Australians, and importantly contributed significantly to the capacity of RPR to develop a survey of a broader group of Queensland Forgotten Australians.

A survey of Forgotten Australians was carried out by RPR Consulting at the end of 2010. The goal of the survey was to collect information on the situation of Forgotten Australians, their experiences with services available to them, and their preferences for the future. The population surveyed were those Forgotten Australians who had been in care in Queensland and included people who were now living in Queensland and interstate. 603 individuals responded to the survey, made up of 251 men and 313 women (see table 1.1, page 6 of volume 2 for the demographic profile of respondents and table 1.2, page 8 for care backgrounds).

The survey aimed to reach as many Forgotten Australians as possible, to make it easy for them to complete the form, and to find a way for their own points of view to be expressed. The result was a combination of ticking the box style questions as well as some open-ended questions where Forgotten Australians could provide answers in their own words. In the light of possible literacy issues, the respondents were invited to seek assistance in completing the form if they felt it necessary.

We can have considerable confidence in the findings for this survey. As in many other social research areas it can be quite difficult gathering information about a group of people like the Forgotten Australians. There can be issues around literacy and there can also be suspicion towards governments and other agencies by Forgotten Australians because of their history with such bodies. Despite these drawbacks, some 603 people responded to this survey and its reach was very extensive. The answers to the open-ended questions provided insights into the backgrounds and circumstances of the respondents and these indicated that the sample was a very diverse group of people. There is also considerable consistency in all of the findings, which lends further credibility to the survey.

This summary report (*volume 1*) focuses on some of the key findings of the survey and, to a lesser extent, the focus groups highlighting the results which are most likely to contribute to planning of future services for Forgotten Australians in Queensland. The full report of the survey (*volume 2*) deserves to be read in its entirety, as it is rich with information about the needs and feelings of Forgotten Australians, and will have benefit beyond this review.

## 2 Long term impacts of time in Care

The survey report gives very important data on what Forgotten Australians view as the most important long-term results of their time in care (section 1.3, page 12 of volume 2). The vast majority of the respondents have been adversely affected by their time in care. Many bear psychological scars – ongoing mental health issues, lack of self confidence and lack of self esteem (30% of respondents); feelings of distrust and a sense of being betrayed by adults, particularly by those in the church and by authority (11%); the impact of loneliness and lack of love and caring as a child (6%); dealing with the legacy of physical, psychological or sexual abuse (13%). A number carry physical impairments; some people lament the loss of contact with family and nearly all have been denied a good education and the many benefits in life which go with that.

A few respondents viewed their time in care in a positive light, granting them a legacy of independence and resilience. However, a far greater number of respondents were bitter about their experiences, and the legacy of psychological and physical damage which it left behind. Some still hungered for answers, others wanted the door closed and never opened. Some of this complexity is evident in the various results summarised in this report and the small number of quotations extracted from the survey and included here.

An important thing to note is that negative impacts appear to have been experienced by people regardless of how long they were in care. So, whether a person was in care for a very short time (1 year or less) or for an extended period (over 10 years) they have experienced trauma which is long lasting.

## 3 Priorities for future services

One of the main goals of the consultations was to ascertain what services would be of most help to Forgotten Australians in the future. Focus group participants were asked to give their views about this and it was a critical goal of the survey.

What follows is a summary of the outcomes of the consultations, with emphasis given to the responses provided by respondents to question 14 ('Please tell us which of the following services are **most important** to you by ticking **five** boxes.'). In this question Forgotten Australians were asked to nominate what future services were likely to be most useful to them in the future. A list of options was presented and respondents were invited to tick five boxes and the data was then analysed by tallying the total number of ticks to ascertain which future services were the most important. As a device for collecting 'votes' on future priorities, this question worked reasonably well and the results appear credible and reliable. While there are some interesting variations according to subgroups, the overall patterns are very consistent. (see Chapter 4, page 54 of volume 2, specifically Table 4.1, for the full tally).

Other information included in this section is:

- focus group feedback where adds to survey
- quotations Forgotten Australians provided in response to the final open ended question of the survey, question 25 (*'If you feel that there are any other issues which are important to you about the future services for Forgotten Australians which have*

*not been mentioned, please tell us what they are:’)* where it helps to illustrate a point (see section 5, page 74 of volume 2 for more details and quotations)

- responses to question 12 (*‘If any of the services or activities listed on this page have been helpful, please tick the box next to them.’*) in the boxed text at the end of each subsection, to illustrate how helpful similar services have been to Forgotten Australians in the past. (see section 3.3, page 37 of volume 2 for full results)

Analysis of all these sources of data provides a very clear and consistent picture of the types of services that Forgotten Australians want in the future.

### **3.1 Assistance in accessing mainstream entitlements and services**

A very high priority for Forgotten Australians is that they are assisted to access mainstream services. This was particularly evident in survey findings. The types of mainstream services most often identified are shown below.

#### **Accessing entitlements and benefits**

**The most important priority for Forgotten Australians is very clear from the survey: 60% indicated that getting information on entitlements and benefits was the most important service they could be offered.** This category of assistance was nominated as the highest priority across all subgroups of Forgotten Australians. Given the circumstances of Forgotten Australians, such as the high incidence of respondents who identified as poor or very poor (18% of Forgotten Australians as compared with 3% in the general population), this result is not surprising. The emphasis in the survey on redress, and feedback in relation to payments from past providers (discussed below) also indicates the importance that people accord to getting financial recompense or assistance.

#### **Accessing health services and nursing homes**

42% of respondents nominated better access to health services as one of their five top priorities, with 49% of those in the 60 – 69 age group giving this top priority. There was also considerable emphasis on the need for health services in response to the final open ended question in the survey. Here health concerns (in particular dental health) featured strongly, and the idea of issuing Forgotten Australians with a ‘gold card’ was common. The following gives a flavour of the comments people made:

*I really wish, I could go to the dentist & get my teeth done, I have only one molar and have to chew with my front teeth & they are wearing down. Please help us get a special card for medical & dentist services. Also there is such a long wait for specialists etc most of our problem its from our treatment in the orphanage. (respondent to question 25)*

Fears about growing old, and entering nursing homes, was also a common concern expressed in the final open ended survey question. Lying behind this was the trauma of entering institutionalised care again. This quote exemplifies the types of comments people made:

*...Aged care is a major worry. I’d rather be dead than go into a nursing home, and feel as defenceless as I was as a child. Regular communication with Forgotten Australians so we know what is happening, who is in charge and what services are available. A gold card so we can get decent medical care. All government depts Aust wide to be educated on us and we have the same rights and footing as the stolen generation. Many of us were stolen as we lost our families. (respondent to question 25)*

### Assistance to get an education or employment

45% of Forgotten Australians nominated help with study, education, employment or volunteering as one of their five priority needs for future services, however those under the age of 50 were much more likely to want help with these things than were the older groups of Forgotten Australians. This is consistent with information provided in focus groups, where some people strongly urged greater assistance in helping Forgotten Australians access meaningful study and work. This is not surprising given that Forgotten Australians often identify the failure to get a good education as one of the most significant negative and long lasting impacts of their time in care as, indicated in this one indicative quote.

*I feel education is the most important thing for us to have access to. I feel the biggest problem that comes from a past like ours, is feeling dumber than everyone else & not capable of doing anything without being told how to do it. Of course intellectually we are no different from everyone else, but education further is expensive and therefore not really an option for us. Education is empowerment! (respondent to question 25)*

#### How helpful has this been to people in the past

Access to literacy and numeracy courses was helpful to 7% of Forgotten Australians, and 13% found learning to use computers was of assistance to them.

### Accessing housing

Although the list of possible priorities from which respondents had to pick five did not include assistance with housing, responses to the final open ended question indicate that Forgotten Australians want greater access to rental assistance or public housing. There were numerous comments on housing, including the following:

*Rent is expensive and it is becoming very difficult to afford renting. Living in small, cramped housing is difficult and disheartening. Access to public housing is slow and many people find it undesirable to live in a section of the community where social problems (alcoholism, unemployment, domestic violence) is rife. Provisions need to be made so forgotten australians can afford adequate, safe housing. (respondent to question 25)*

*Easy access or priority public housing as there are a lot of Forgotten Australians that are homeless, department of housing should make forgotten Australians top priority and it would be nice if housing was free for forgotten Australians as the government placed us in this situation so they should look after us. They took away our ability to have a normal life so they (the government) should give us something back.(respondent to question 25)*

*Having cheaper rent, that is what takes nearly all of my income. (respondent to question 25)*

### 3.2 Assistance to locate records and reunite with families

A significant portion of Forgotten Australians want assistance to help them navigate the systems and records of past providers. 38% wanted help with finding records or meeting their families and the importance of this to some Forgotten Australians is highlighted in comments given to the final open ended question, as the following demonstrates.

*Most important issues to me is to find my sister who was in the home with me, they said she was adopted. Because she had different name than me, I can not get any records of her when I rang the nuns, they could not confirm or deny her existence. This is what I do know. Her name is ... she was seven and a half years old when we went into the home in april, 1948 her father was ... and her mother was ... and we lived in ... The home was ... I'm 66 years old, and I fear that, I would not see her, or get I know her in my life time. This is the most important issues to me, more important these any other issues. (respondent to question 25)*

#### How helpful has this been in the past

25% of Forgotten Australians found assistance with locating their records or meeting their family was helpful.

### 3.3 Help in getting justice

The survey shows that there is a very strong call from Forgotten Australians for services to help them advocate for justice. 38% listed 'assistance making a complaint or seeking compensation' as one of their five priority needs.

This was echoed in responses to the final open-ended question 25. People want justice, which is often seen as more than just the government taking responsibility for what had happened to them. It also entailed the legal right to see the perpetrators punished. Two comments illustrate the views:

*If I did half the things my abusers did to me, I would be in jail. yet they've answered to no-one. Faced no court of law and to this day they still walk the streets free whilst I've been condemned to a life time of painful memories hatred and other irreversible consequences! PS I think \$21000 compensation for the loss of my childhood and the atrocities bestowed upon me is a slap in the [face] and totally inadequate! (respondent to question 25)*

*My main problem is with the fact that although we have had some monetary (money) compensation from the Government. It was not the government that abused me. It was 2 nuns at ... orphanage that did this. I would like them to acknowledge what they did. I don't want an apology from the Government or the ... orphanage, I want a apology from the nuns that abused me ... but the other one sister ... is comfortably living 10 min from me at ... Make the actual people responsible apologise. (respondent to question 25)*

Whilst there was clearly much appreciation for redress and other payments from government or past providers (59% said it had helped them) and though neither the survey nor the focus group methodology explicitly sought views on it, the Queensland redress scheme was alluded to many times in responses to the final open-ended question of the survey and also by participants to the focus groups. There is discontent with the scheme on a number of fronts: people were unhappy that the scheme had ended, indicating that they (or others they knew) had found out about the scheme too late, and now were unable to be compensated by the state. Others felt the level of payment received was inadequate. A smaller number of people indicated concern that certain categories of Forgotten Australians were excluded from the scheme when they had also suffered enormously.

Quotations from the survey, particularly those on page 76 and 77 of the volume 2 report, indicate the type and vigour of the responses, but two below serve to illustrate the main views expressed:

*I think the redress was unfair I can't read + write good + didn't know about it. (respondent to question 25)*

*The compensation offered by the Qld Govt. was an insult that was not worth applying for. It forced applicants to relive the experiences for a paltry amount. I did not apply. Personally, I do not know how you repair a life or compensate for it. (respondent to question 25)*

#### How helpful has this been in the past

59% of Forgotten Australians found a payment from government or past providers to be helpful, a figure well ahead of any other factor.

The second most important factor that has helped Forgotten Australians to this point is an apology from governments or past providers, with 44% of respondents nominating this as being helpful in the survey. There was also strong support for the national and state apologies from focus group participants.

17% of Forgotten Australians were helped by getting assistance to make a complaint of abuse against the church or through the criminal justice system and 13% found it useful to be assisted in making submissions to the government or to inquires.

### 3.4 Counselling

Focus groups indicated that some attendees had accessed and valued counselling and that there was strong support for Forgotten Australians to be able to continue to access counselling, long term if necessary.

Particular attention was given in the survey to counselling, so that the extent of the need for counselling would be clear, and interest in various forms of counselling would be known. 36% of Forgotten Australians ranked individual counselling as one of 5 top priorities for future services. In addition, the survey specifically asked Forgotten Australians if they thought counselling was important. Nearly half (46%) of the respondents indicated that it was important, whilst 24% indicated that it was not important. The remaining 30% either did not respond or did not know. There are some interesting subgroup differences in response to this question:

- the greatest level of support for counselling was among **younger Forgotten Australians** (in the 50% to 60% range) and the lowest level was among older Forgotten Australians (in the 30% to 40% range)
- **Indigenous Forgotten Australians** were more likely than the non-Indigenous to favour counselling (54% to 46%)
- 53% of **respondents living alone** wanted counselling compared to 46% of those living with others.

Women were slightly more likely than men to consider counselling important (50% to 45%), as were those on government payments compared with those with other sources of income (49% to 44%).

In terms of the type of counselling that people want, focus group participants provided interesting views, suggesting that counseling services should be able to be: accessed quickly, when people are in crisis, available on an outreach basis for some people who need it and available to both Forgotten Australians and their families. Where people need to be referred to psychiatrists or psychologists, the person referred to should be able to work appropriately with Forgotten Australians and there should not be a limit on the number of sessions.

The survey tested interest in different types of counselling. Forgotten Australians overwhelmingly regarded face-to-face counselling as the most useful type. Some 86% of those Forgotten Australians who thought counselling was important wanted face-to-face

counselling and this was consistent across all sub-groups. 10% wanted telephone counselling, 3% indicated a desire to take part in group sessions and only 1% favoured counselling over the internet.<sup>1</sup>

**How helpful has this been in the past**

41% of Forgotten Australians nominated counselling as having helped them; seeing a counsellor face to face was helpful for 30% of these respondents and getting counselling over the phone helped 11% of people. A further 7% indicated that they were helped by attending a self help or counselling group.

### 3.5 Peer Leadership

Peer leadership was a topic of much conversation at some of the focus groups with some attendees expressing concern about what they saw as inadequacies of the current peer leadership at Lotus Place, through the Historical Abuse Network (HAN). There was concern about lack of democratic processes to select members of HAN and about what some participants regarded as a diminished involvement of Forgotten Australians in decision making at Lotus Place. Suggestions were made about how peer leaders could be selected, trained and developed in the future although there were different perspectives on what type of peer leadership was needed and the role that these leaders should play.

It was very important therefore that the survey tested how important peer leadership was to Forgotten Australians, and what people meant by peer leadership. In the ranking of the five most important priorities for services 36% of respondents indicated support for having trained leaders to advocate for Forgotten Australians. But the survey probed this area further, asking Forgotten Australians if there should be assistance for Forgotten Australians to become peer leaders. Some 56% supported this idea while only 4% said no. A sizeable proportion (25%) replied that they didn't know and another 15% gave no response. Thus while the majority supported the idea, some 40% of Forgotten Australians were unsure, suggesting that many may not have understood what the question meant or did not know what peer leadership was.

While there were some variations within the various subgroups, the differences were not very large. Indigenous Forgotten Australians were more likely to support peer leadership than their non-Indigenous counterparts, as were those Forgotten Australians who had little support available to them.

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the representatives of the Aftercare Resource Centre, speaking from their experience in delivering on-line counselling to other client groups, indicated that people are unlikely to indicate a preference for internet based counselling, particularly if their computer skills are poor, but that once exposed to this type of counselling a group of clients find it more acceptable than other forms of counselling.

When it came to the type of peer leadership people sought the results were not clear cut. Those who favoured peer leadership were asked to select one thing that they felt it was most important for peer leaders to do from a list provided:

- 25% thought that **peer support to other Forgotten Australians** was most important
- 23% thought that **educating professionals** about Forgotten Australians was most important
- 22% favoured **helping the public to gain a better understanding** of Forgotten Australians
- 19% thought that peer leaders should **advocate for the needs of Forgotten Australians**
- 11% thought that peer leaders should have a role in **helping plan services or activities** for Forgotten Australians.

What is critical from these findings is that the smallest percentage of respondents (11%) supported peer leaders having a role in helping plan services and activities, though this role was strongly endorsed by some focus group attendees. Also significant is that 23% of the survey respondents concurred with a strongly held view of focus group participants that there needs to be more work done to train mainstream service providers - both those currently in the system, and people training to be in positions – and saw a role for peer leaders to be involved in this effort.

#### How helpful has this been in the past

18% of Forgotten Australians found getting support from other Forgotten Australians helpful, whilst 17% found providing support to others helpful to themselves

### 3.6 Meeting with other Forgotten Australians

Social interactions with Forgotten Australians is important to some Forgotten Australians. Overall 35% of survey respondents gave priority to having a place to go to meet with other Forgotten Australians, and 21% wanted to participate in group activities. Notably, this pattern pertained to those living in Brisbane and South East Queensland as well as to those living in other parts of Queensland, where geographic disbursement of Forgotten Australian makes meeting and group activities more challenging.

Being able to interact with other Forgotten Australians is more important to some groups of Forgotten Australians than to others:

- 44% of **Indigenous respondents** wanted a place to meet with other Forgotten Australians and 31% wanted group activities with other Forgotten Australians (compared with 35% and 19% of non-Indigenous)
- 44% of **respondents who lived alone** wanted a meeting place and 24% group activities compare with 32% and 19% of those living with others
- 38% of **respondents on Government payments** wanted a place to go to meet with compared with 29% of those on other income.
- whilst men and women were equally interested in having a meeting place, 25% of **men** wanted group activities, as compare to 18% of women.

#### How helpful has this been in the past

In total 17% of Forgotten Australians said that they had found having somewhere welcoming and safe to go (a drop in centre) helpful. Getting together with people who had had similar experiences was helpful to even more people with 23% indicating this.

Similarly, group activities were useful to some people. 24% found taking part in public events to be helpful and 9% found taking part in activities like sewing, gardening, walking group and empower arts to be useful.

### 3.7 Supporting people living in regional Queensland, other states and in prison

An open ended question sought feedback on the type of contact people thought would be helpful for services to have with Forgotten Australians living in Queensland regional areas or interstate. The question was open to all respondents, not just those living in these areas. While some 350 respondents answered this question, a large number indicated that they didn't know and another considerable proportion answered in a way which suggested they had not fully understood the question, as they offered answers about the *content* of the contact, rather than the *type* of contact. Often respondents offered more than one suggestion. Still the results indicate some important directions to be considered in planning future services. It should be noted that results were similar for those respondents living in Brisbane and Southeast Queensland and those living in other parts of the state or interstate.

The most popular option for contact with interstate and regionally-based Forgotten Australians was face-to-face contact (20%). This was often expressed as a desire for visits to the area from persons based elsewhere (such as medical professionals, counsellors or government contact people), though the most common way of expressing this was simply 'face-to-face'. Telephone contact came next (15%), followed by contact through the mail (11% with regular newsletters often mentioned).

Only a small percentage of people suggested the establishment of support groups or the establishment of a venue where Forgotten Australians could get together. An even smaller percentage sought travel assistance to allow groups of Forgotten Australians to get together and meet with service providers in larger centres.

It should be noted that this result is somewhat inconsistent with the findings reported in 3.6 above where there was a higher level of support for meeting places and groups. Reading the comments people made in response to this question, the significant message for service planning seems to be that Forgotten Australians just want to be able to rely on some form of regular contact – with one another and service providers - and don't appear to have unrealistic expectations about what form that contact should take. A few comments show what some Forgotten Australians living outside of Brisbane are requesting:

*Financial support to attend special occasions in Brisbane. Everything seems to be for Brisbane Forgotten Australians. Moral support there is none here. Not having to wait a month for counselling when you feel desperate. Something for country people a return fair for Brisbane is \$110. Loneliness, I have no family here. I often feel desperate & don't know why.*

*As I live so far away I don't think you can help me other than to help me get to some of your activities. People in the country don't get help. I would like to get my teeth done as I had to get*

*them all out at the age of 18 and I can't wear the bottom set.*

Finally, a small number of prisoners responded to the survey and it is noteworthy that some of those who did indicated their desire to be connected to the service system for Forgotten Australians, if only so that they are better able to access supports once they leave prison, as these quotes indicate.

*I wish there was a group who came to prisons. Just to get support networks for when we get out. Familiar Faces. (respondent to question 25)*

*Services for those that are about to be released from prison, that have no family support. This is a major issue for those applying for parole as the Queensland Parole Board does not recognise that, for many former wards. We do not have any informal supports and refuse applications because of this reason. We are not even able to access grant applications due to not being able to use the internet. Thank you. (respondent to question 25)*

#### **4 Barriers to service access**

It is important in planning future services for there to be greater understanding of why people don't access available services now. The survey hence sought views about why people did not access mainstream and Forgotten Australian services. Focus groups also contributed information on barriers to accessing dedicated services.

The three most common reasons why Forgotten Australians did not avail themselves of services were the same for both mainstream and dedicated Forgotten Australian services: they were not aware of the existence of services, were not able to access the services physically and had psychological barriers to access resulting directly from the legacy of their time in care. A smaller percentage of people found services unsatisfactory or unresponsive. The results are discussed below.

##### **Physical barriers to access**

Lack of physical access to services has emerged as a significant reason why Forgotten Australians did not use services, both mainstream and dedicated. This was a more significant barrier for Forgotten Australian services with roughly 29% of Forgotten Australians who answered this question listing physical access barriers: distance, cost of travel, living interstate, or inability to access services due to a disability. For mainstream services distance was a barrier for 12% of respondents.

Physical access issues were naturally most evident for Forgotten Australians living in regional and rural Queensland. 21% of those living outside Brisbane and the South East corner gave distance as the main reason for not using mainstream services, whilst 28% indicated that distance or travel issues were the main reason for not using Forgotten Australian services.

Even those living in Brisbane and the South East found services difficult to access physically. Some 12% of them indicated that this was the primary reason they did not use services for Forgotten Australians. Only 4% gave it as the main reason for not using mainstream services.

Another 7% of Forgotten Australians answering the survey are in prison and all of them listed this as their primary reason for not being able to access mainstream services; though only 4% nominated being in prison as the main reason for not accessing dedicated services, suggesting that the FASS may be successfully reaching some prisoners.

### **Psychological barriers to service access**

Significantly, people do not access services for reasons which relate directly to their negative experiences of being in care; because they don't trust governments or other authorities, don't want the pain of revisiting their past, have a sense of futility in seeking help so long after the events or other such factors directly relevant to their time in care. This impact was significant regardless of whether services were mainstream or dedicated Forgotten Australian services. 21% of all respondents indicated that legacy issues were central to why they did not access Forgotten Australian services and 22% for mainstream services. What is important to note, however, is that lack of trust in service providers, as a subset of this category, was much more prevalent in relation to mainstream services (12% explicitly mentioned lack of trust in governments or other authorities as a reason for not approaching these kind of services) whereas for dedicated Forgotten Australian service the figure was lower (4%).

### **Not being aware of services**

Survey responses indicate that there is more work to be done in raising awareness of the services that people are entitled to receive, within both the mainstream and dedicated Forgotten Australian system. 19% of respondents did not use Forgotten Australian services because they were not aware of their existence. A small proportion also indicated that they were not eligible to use Forgotten Australians services because they had lived with foster parents, which indicates a lack of awareness of the criteria for accessing services through Lotus place.

Though the figure is lower for mainstream services there were still 10% of respondents who indicated they did not use mainstream services because they were unaware of them. A further 15% said they were ineligible for mainstream services, presumably some of this is real (e.g. people have jobs and don't meet the income thresholds) but some of it no doubt relates to difficulties utilising eligibility requirements.

Lack of awareness of services (mainstream and dedicated) was higher for those living outside of Brisbane and South East Queensland.

### **Unsatisfactory experiences with services**

People continue to report unsatisfactory experiences with services as being a barrier to access. For mainstream services 15% of those who answered the question indicated that services were unresponsive due either to the poor reception Forgotten Australians received when they approached services (9%) or the limited availability of services such as long waiting times for public housing or an absence of affordable dental care (6%).

Difficulties with services can also be a barrier to Forgotten Australian's willingness to use dedicated services. This was evident in the focus groups where a number of participants spoke strongly about their dissatisfaction with one or more aspect of the current Forgotten Australian service system. It was difficult to gauge how pervasive this view was, however, as

it takes a very strong individual to present an alternative view during a focused discussion when someone is articulately and stridently speaking about what isn't working.

It was therefore very important that the survey gave ample opportunity for people to express dissatisfaction if they wanted to, so that we could understand not only the extent of unhappiness with current services but also get a feel for the main causes. Two open ended questions helped to give this picture: question 13 (*'I think the main reason why I haven't used services, or activities, available for Forgotten Australians is because . . .'*) and the final open-ended question 25.

Whilst there is a level of unhappiness with services, indicating the need for some reflection and improvement, this was not a view expressed by a huge number of respondents. About 9% of Forgotten Australians answering question 13, or 35 people, indicated that their experiences with dedicated Forgotten Australian services had been unsatisfactory. This was because the services were unresponsive to the needs of respondents or people felt intimidated or unsafe in some fashion.

A number of respondents to question 25 also indicated a lack of safety as an impediment to accessing current Forgotten Australian services. The following selected quotations illustrate the types of comments people made.

*I think the main reason I haven't used services, or activities, available for Forgotten Australians is because I believe that most of the workers and some of the peers are not genuine in their concerns. (Ambivalent) I honestly don't know if I'm welcome at the drop-in centre or not. I feel not. There is also a conflict of beliefs. I don't want to deal with the Catholic system ... thanks but I'd rather not have help from people whose heart isn't in it ... We really shouldn't be made to feel bad because we came forward to receive the money allocated to us. Most of us have families who are in need and who have suffered hardship because of our past traumas. (If you knew half the truth of what it's been like for me personally you wouldn't believe it.) (respondent to question 13)*

*I feel perhaps more assistants at the drop in centre are needed when people come in as every time I call in it's friendly at the front desk, but when I get inside I don't feel safe around the other past residents. Usually there seems only 1 or 2 (coordinators ?) they are busy with people and the ones having a coffee, etc. They are all in a big room & it feels uncomfortable so I've decided not to go back. More volunteers or workers needed in the room & perhaps need to have distractions & invite people if they want to talk suggest they can go in another room. (respondent to question 13)*

*I have found that education about care leavers is poor and there is a lack of professionals who will come on board because they know nothing about us. I'm looked at with disdain + indifference when trying to explain + ask for help. (respondent to question 13)*

*I don't want to appear "snobby" but I do not feel comfortable mixing with people with criminal or high level mental health issues. I do not feel safe if I go to a centre where this is possible. I would love support groups for different types of people. It sometimes appears "we" cope because we have become "educated" and survived in a job. As a teacher my past life NEVER leaves me. It also can be positive not just negative. At this stage I don't need daytime "Knitting" clubs - weekend support group for mixed prof. people would be good. (respondent to question 25)*

## 5 And finally

The survey and focus groups concentrated on the future and were not intended to evaluate current services. Instead, the consultations sought to hear views from Forgotten Australians on what they wanted the service system to address next for Queensland to continue to lead the way in responding to the needs of Forgotten Australians. Among the many suggestions for change were the voices of people commending the state and service providers for what it had done so far. These quotes illustrate the sentiments expressed by some:

*Just like to say congratulations the Queensland authorities that have tried to help “Forgotten Australians” by providing services, paying some compensation and keeping in touch (by mail for interstate people) with us. This is far more than other states have done over many years. Hear nothing in south Australia from S.A authorities on “Forgotten Australians”. keep up the good work Queensland. (respondent to question 25)*

*Don’t know of any. All services and help for Forgotten Aussies seems to be in place. Thank you for being there to help when people need you. (respondent to question 25)*

*The centre [Lotus Place] is a life saver – even though it isn’t perfect I am really happy it is here. (Brisbane focus group participant)*