



FIND & CONNECT WEB RESOURCE NEWSLETTER

Issue 23: June 2014

A web resource for Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the 'final' edition of the Find & Connect web resource newsletter. For this newsletter we thought it would be good to reflect on the last three years of the Find & Connect web resource project. For everyone concerned the last three years have been an amazing journey, as you will read in the following pages. One of the themes throughout is that the work has only just begun - there is so much more to do. Having said that the web resource you see today is a tremendous achievement made possible by Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants and their advocacy groups, you (the stakeholders), the [whole web resource team](#)* and the Federal Government funding.

For my part, when I look back over the last three years, I am amazed at how far we have come. The usability testing on the website instigated a huge change in functionality of the web resource - one that we never thought was possible - so that now the web resource is easier for our core audience, Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants, to use. Thanks to all of you who took part in the two rounds of usability

testing and those of you who have given us valuable feedback that helped us improve the website.

The stakeholder workshops that we held in every state and territory throughout the project proved to be an important element in the development of our work. I have learnt the huge benefits of the community of practice that we have built. I know you have all enjoyed getting together at our workshops and the lively 'organic' discussions that have taken place there. Of course all our work is shaped and around improving outcomes for care leavers. I give heartfelt thanks to all the care leavers who generously gave their time and shared their personal experiences with the aim of helping us all understand the importance of records. Thanks also to all of the stakeholders who have been willing to work hard to improve the information available on the web resource and to work, in most cases, with their very limited resources, to ensure information about records is more easily accessible. Thanks also to all the staff of the support services around the country who have worked with us, embedded the

web resource into their work and given us invaluable feedback that has helped our development.

I think everyone on this project has learnt a lot and been hugely affected by this work. This has been the most important work I have ever been involved with, it's been a pleasure, a challenge and a privilege.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this editorial, this is the last of our regular monthly newsletters, however we do hope to bring you newsletters in the future to keep you in touch with our work in the next phase of the project - hopefully on a quarterly basis. You can also stay in touch with the developments in your state and territory via the Find & Connect support service newsletters. I hope you enjoy this issue of reflections on the project and that you continue to work with us in the future.

Thank you all!

Sal Orpin

Communications and Liaison Officer

*The full list of the web resource team is available at: www.findandconnect.gov.au/about/web-resource-credits

THE WEB RESOURCE CONTAINS MORE THAN

15,000
PAGES



1,950
HOMES



1,897
PAGES RELATED
TO RECORDS



2,211
PHOTOS



“ *Let our histories be visible* ”
Submission 22. Senate Enquiry 2004.

LEE BUTTERWORTH QLD HISTORIAN



Salvation Army Industrial School, Chelmer (1923-1941) saved from demolition in 2014

After nearly three years of working on the Find & Connect web resource it is not going to be easy to leave this project. I acknowledge the privilege of being introduced and welcomed into the world of care leavers. Their determination and courage to speak up and expose the truth about their time in care, which consequently encouraged others to step out of the shadows of shame, is impressive. I attended the 15th Anniversary of the Forde Inquiry in June. The close ties Leenen Forde has developed with many care leavers over the last 15 years was clear. Ms Forde acknowledged the fight by care leavers to tell their stories and encouraged them to continue their fight for justice, which has resulted in the current Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

The dedication of those people involved with the support services for Forgotten Australians is admirable. In particular, the staff at Lotus Place have created a stimulating and homely environment for their clients. From the beginning they made me feel welcome and I now feel very "at home" there. In fact they might not get rid of me!

I recognise that many organisations that ran out-of-home care institutions have a huge task associated with identifying, indexing and storing archival records. I thank the record holders who have found time to assist me, thus making my role related to the Find & Connect web resource much easier. It was great to see so many agents associated with the plight of care leavers at our last workshop. I hope this has set a precedent for the sharing of ideas in the future. I wish you all good luck, but not goodbye.

CAROLINE EVANS TAS HISTORIAN

It's been a great experience to be the state-based historian for Find & Connect in Tasmania mostly because I've met some amazing people. This last newsletter piece is a big thank-you to you all.

It's been fantastic to be part of a national project and to have colleagues all over Australia. I would especially like to thank the Melbourne team for teaching me how to use a database and everyone for the friendships we have formed.

I've also met some wonderful people in Tasmania. The Adoptions and Permanency Service at the Department of Health and Human Services answered every e-mail promptly, told me about new Homes, and researched the closing dates of family group homes. The staff at the Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office (TAHO) and their colleagues at the National Archives of Australia answered numerous questions about their holdings and provided a lovely place to do research, a home away from home. It's been great to work with Relationships Australia, especially through their friendly and productive reference group meetings. A number of past providers generously provided photographs and information about their records. Many of the current owners of previous Homes showed a keen interest in the project and kindly allowed me to take pictures of their houses for the website.

Yet the biggest thank you goes to the people who sent queries through the website. Many of them were care leavers who had lived through the history I wrote. Some contributed photographs of Homes or their own research, while others made comments that led to more accurate histories of the Homes. Writing history with their input powerfully emphasised the way that historical documents, such as newspapers or official letters and reports, can tell a different story to the one that the children experienced. This insight will stay with me when I go on to write other histories.

ROSEMARY FRANCIS VIC HISTORIAN

Reflecting on my experience as a state based historian working in a half-time capacity from March 2012 on the Find & Connect web resource, I am impressed by the collaborative nature of the project. In addition to working with colleagues responsible for the construction and usability of the web resource, we liaised with, and sought assistance from, those organisations which held records about Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants. In the course of our historical research we consulted with those advocates for Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants, including Leonie Sheedy and Frank Golding from CLAN, who had the courage and determination to pursue governments to acknowledge the deprivation and cruelty that many who spent time in 'care' experienced.

From the historian's perspective, it has been an interesting and challenging national project as it sought to meet the needs of a specific group of people, who spent part or all of their childhood in institutions. Our priority was to include information about as many organisations as possible in Victoria who were responsible for the 'care' of children and to confirm the location and accessibility of the records they held. We visited many of these organisations over the course of the project.

As it was 'a work in progress' we had to be sufficiently flexible to incorporate changes to protocols, which arose from usability studies and other feedback. Although we used archival and other resources to build our history of child welfare in Victoria, we also incorporated information received from those people who actually spent time in institutions. Other feedback came through the workshops, which included the stakeholders, such as Open Place, who used the web resource and interested individuals who had worked in the child welfare sector. I wish to thank all those organisations and individuals for their co-operation over the past two and a half years. Their names appeared in earlier newsletters.



The first 5 children to arrive at Tresca, 1958, courtesy of National Archives of Australia.

GARY GEORGE

SA & NT HISTORIAN

This last three years on the Find & Connect web resource project has been an incredible learning experience. While I had some familiarity with SA welfare history through my work on the SA guide *Finding Your Own Way* I was unaware of how much more there was to learn. The nature of the website required huge amounts of research to expand on what had come before. New research into hospitals and convalescent Homes, and more recently SA Aboriginal Missions and Disability Homes has expanded my comprehension of the history of 'care' even further.

The addition of the Northern Territory to our role, first temporarily and later permanently, was another unexpected learning curve for me. Discovering, with the assistance of so many forward thinking and dedicated people in the NT, the histories of government institutions, Aboriginal Missions and Reserves, and most especially the leprosariums of Mud Island, Channel Island and East Arm, was both fascinating and confronting for me.

There has been excitement with the discovery of 'new' Homes and new sources of records. The encouragement of finding individuals and organisations who enthusiastically embraced the opportunity Find & Connect presented to help them make the records they hold accessible. Sadly there has also been the frustration of dealing with those who see their role as protectors and custodians of the past. People who cannot see that they are denying access to those whose past it is they hold.

Most importantly there has been the joy of meeting and working with so many incredible people from whom I have learnt so much. My fellow historians and project team members; archivists and other workers from many different organisations; support workers and advocates for the rights of those who spent their childhood and youth in out-of-home care; and most importantly the amazing, resilient and awe inspiring former residents of children's homes. It has been a privilege to be taught by you all.



Gary and Karen researching at the Department of Health Archives in NT

KAREN GEORGE

SA & NT HISTORIAN

A few years ago when I had a different job, I was told: "This is the best and most important job you will ever have". Well, it wasn't. The Find & Connect web resource project is the best job I have ever had. First of all, I have been able to take a great piece of work, *Finding Your Own Way*, the original SA guide to records, and make it better and more accessible. Taking on the role of historian for the Northern Territory has also been amazing. I have learned so much about the systems and practices of child welfare in the Territory and how they connect like a web across the whole of Australia. The invaluable assistance and openness of record holders and archivists there allowed detailed archival research which is always a joy. Working with historians, archivists and other like-minded staff across Australia has been a unique experience, possibly never to be repeated. Meeting with other stakeholders and forging links between them and the support service has been rewarding, as has getting to know the wonderful staff at Elm Place.

But the best part of this job has been feeling as if I have made a bit of a difference by helping people find answers, both answering queries coming through the web resource and working with *Forgotten Australians* in person. I am very proud of my work with Steven Page who has been successful in getting agreement for a permanent memorial to State Children to be installed at West Terrace Cemetery.

There is still so much to be done, so much I want to do. I will continue to advocate for better and more compassionate access to records for survivors of the care system. I hope to see all record gatekeepers break down the barriers and become record mediators.

Oh yes, and one of the coolest parts of the job was working on all of this with my brother, George.....I mean Gary!

“ *It is not my file. This is my discovery manual. It has given me a new lease on life....* ”

Vlad Selakovic, *Forgotten Australian*, April 2010.

LIAM HOGAN

ACT HISTORIAN

I came to this role in October 2013 to replace Lydia Connell. Coming to a major project well after it has started is always a bit like arriving late to a party. No matter how well you might mean, you've missed a lot of the experience, and you can only ever appreciate what you've missed by way of people explaining things. My attachment to the Find & Connect web resource project towards the latter end of its current phase has been an exercise in catching-up.

With each instance of learning, and discovery of something that the other State-based historians and web resource team members have taken for granted, I've come to appreciate just what an achievement the web resource genuinely is. Apart from the immediate utility of the site for its audience - care leavers, their families, and historians of Australian child welfare - I've come to the view that the web resource offers a model for collaborative digital history of any kind. In the same way that the information in the database offers vital information to its care leaver subjects and to future generations, I've been quite inspired by the potential for historians in every other field to see what the Find & Connect web resource project has achieved, and to ask: 'why don't we do something like that?'

And even further, we can hope: beyond anything this project has achieved in collating information about child welfare institutional records, there'll be the deeper exercise in encouraging Governments, and record-holding institutions, to be a part of an open historical process by being transparent and active in record-keeping. If there's one thing about a good research project, or party, it's that everyone is made welcome, and everyone shares their stories and their knowledge.

“Records are not records per se; they are the very fabric of people’s past and present lives, their *raison d’être*.”

Greg Baker, care leaver,
October 2012

MIKE JONES LEAD ARCHIVIST

Working on the Find & Connect web resource project has been an amazing experience. Since becoming an archivist I have always believed in the importance and power of records. As part of Find & Connect workshops and meetings we have continued to hear this idea repeated and reinforced. Though many records start out as organisational documents or government files, when people are the subject they can be deeply personal. Records and collections can reveal the past and help people uncover what happened to themselves, their families and their friends. They can tell us about our own identity and the identities of others; about where we have come from and why we ended up where we are today.

But where these vital records still exist (and, sadly, there are many which do not) they must be discoverable, accessible and understandable. Not just to archivists, organisations and governments, but – first and foremost – to the people who are the subject of those records and their families.

The past three years as part of the Find & Connect web resource team have made me believe this more than ever. In working with a wonderful team of archivists and historians, and meeting with care leavers, advocacy groups, support services and record holders across the country, the project has shaped the way I view archives and records, and my own profession, in a profound way.

Thank you to all those who shared their stories, attended workshops and provided material for the web resource. Here’s hoping we can continue improving the discoverability and accessibility of the histories and records of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants into the future.

MEGG KELHAM NT HISTORIAN

What a delight it has been to work on the history of out of home care in the Northern Territory. As someone who came late to the project and knew almost nothing of welfare history when I started, my first response to the end of the project is to beg for more time on the grounds that I’ve only just hit my research stride. Though I’m pretty confident that most of the Territory’s children’s institutions have been identified, I’m sadly conscious that I didn’t have time to describe as many institutional records as I would have liked. My only hope is that the current Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse will encourage children’s institutions of all sizes to publicise the existence of whatever records they have.

In this regard I have been personally inspired by the Lutheran Archive in Alice Springs. Located near the small cottages which housed children from remote cattle stations attending town based schools in the 1960s and 70s, the archive is brim full of photographs, news cuttings and other records relevant to the site’s boarding history. It is opened every Sunday after church by volunteers who encourage people to find themselves in photographs and reminisce about life on what locals call the “mission block”. The church also hosts regular mission block reunions. The most recent was held last Saturday with people attending from around Australia. I was more than happy to eavesdrop on the gathering, promoting the Find & Connect web resource in the process.

In another memorable and powerful act of individual generosity, the current owner of Central Australia’s first government run receiving home, volunteered to open her now private home to the general public, enabling this forgotten local history to become known. It is acts like these which have countered the sometimes difficult negative stories which research has also unearthed.

There are too many people to name individually, so I hope all of you who informed my work, from casual acquaintances who have shared information on street corners to the employees of large government departments will accept my sincere thanks for making this such a memorable history project to work on.

CATE O’NEILL NATIONAL EDITOR & RESEARCH CO-ORDINATOR

This edition of the newsletter is an opportunity to take a minute to pause and reflect on the last 3 years, and my time as the “National Editor & Research Co-ordinator” for the web resource. The Editor hat has never quite seemed to fit – I started working on this project many years ago now as an historian, developing content for what was ‘Pathways Victoria’. When the project went national and morphed into the Find & Connect web resource, my new role saw me working with a wonderful team of State-based historians, and getting their histories onto the web resource. It was quite a change of tack for me to be the person issuing directives to the historians about following data entry guidelines and thinking about informatics, standards and consistency – can I confess that ‘all that boring stuff’ never seemed that important to me when I had my historian hat on?

Thank you to Rebe Taylor – a fine historian who has a great understanding of the challenges or working in the digital realm – for all her great work editing the web resource. I guess that working in this role gave me a new perspective on the project and that makes sense, seeing that being a part of the Find & Connect web resource project has been all about new perspectives. I am still learning so much from this project, never more so than when I have the opportunity to get away from my desk and meet with stakeholders – the Find & Connect support services, archivists, past (and current) providers, genealogists and most of all, with care leavers. So much has been achieved because of the advocacy and courage of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants, and I feel very fortunate to be working in this space.

What happens in the next phase of this project is still a little uncertain (or as Sal would say, ‘organic’) – I’m sad at the prospect of our team shrinking as this period of intense historical work comes to an end. I’m staggered that even with this amazing group of committed, overworked historians, it seems like we’ve only just scratched the surface and there’s so much more history to be uncovered. Maybe the next phase will see more stories being told by care leavers and their families? I certainly hope so.

NAOMI PARRY
NSW HISTORIAN

I became a historian because I wanted to make a difference by writing history that means something to the people that lived it, so this project was a golden opportunity. It has been an honour to work with the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants who have been involved with this project. I must also thank the representatives of past care providers I have met during this project. I know it has been hard to find the time to answer our questions but you have. Thank you.

Researching for the Find & Connect web resource has always been fun, especially the picture research, but if I had to pick one thing that stands out, it would be answering feedback. Historians don't often get a chance to talk directly to the people we are writing for, and I found it immensely rewarding to answer questions people have had about their lives and their history. I remember the surprise and pleasure expressed by one of our very first clients. We'd only been able to give her a snippet of information, but she said this was the first time, in years of searching, she felt she had received a human response. That was enough to keep me going for the next three years!

There have been frustrations with this project, not least of which is that it's always felt too short to tackle a system as large as that of New South Wales. The team members on the Find & Connect web resource have worked from our home bases, so we've felt the tyranny of distance. However, we've been united in the goal of improving information for our stakeholders and supporting each other as we work with what are often hard and sad stories. That's forged strong bonds within this band of historians, archivists, social workers and nerds. I'd especially like to thank Lydia and Liam, who have helped with the research in NSW.

At the end of three years of hard slog, it's good to be able to say that the NSW Find & Connect web resource is a better finding aid and historical resource for children's Homes and welfare systems in NSW than anything that has existed before. Thanks to everyone who has helped me get it there.

DEBRA ROSSER
WA HISTORIAN

It is hard to believe that nearly three years have passed. I am indebted to Western Australian record-holding agencies and librarians who have been generous, helpful and enthusiastic in their approach to this project. Sadly, time has run out before the full picture of out-of-home care in WA has been painted. I apologise for my omissions. Most of the major child welfare institutions, events, record collections and legislation are identified. However, children were

also placed in hospitals, mental health institutions, Homes for people with intellectual and physical disabilities, missions and adult gaols. There is limited information about these WA sectors in the web resource. I hope that the people who notice these gaps are inspired to document their history and publish information about their record collections.

I urge all agencies who have photographs to find the resources to digitise and make them available. There is no greater gift for people who have no photos of themselves (or their relatives) as children. Many agencies have done or are doing this, so you don't have to reinvent the wheel. Others can help you with policies, funding advice and equipment.

Finally, to the people who were in out of home care as children in WA, I say 'good luck, keep looking, and I hope the web resource helps'. You are the reason I have worked in this area for nearly 20 years, and I am delighted that I will be able to continue my association with you after this project ends. As an 'outsider' you have made me welcome, trusted me, and given meaning to my research. Thank you.



Children at the Salvation Army Girls' Home, Cottesloe in the 1950s or 1960s.

Courtesy of Salvation Army Heritage Museum WA

RACHEL TROPEA
PROGRAM MANAGER

My time working on the Find & Connect web resource and its predecessor 'Pathways' in Victoria has been the most important in my working life. It has been a privilege to work with and for those people who spent some or all of their childhoods in institutions, and I have been deeply moved and affected by people's stories (and I continue to be).

Our main goals for the website were to create a valuable resource for those searching for records and information about their time in care, and to ensure that the story of institutional care in Australia becomes part of the national narrative and consciousness. To this end, our historians in each state and territory have worked furiously to get information about every Home they could identify onto the web resource, information which was often disparate, conflicting, or little known. They were aided by librarians, past providers, archivists, ex-staff of those institutions, support services, and most importantly by those who had lived in those places when they were young.

Information about records has been harder to obtain for all the reasons which have been well documented over the course of the project, but our hope is that the web resource, and particularly the success of the Records Access Documentation Project (RADP) will encourage and inspire past providers to continue to document their collections and provide appropriate access services. We applaud the organisations who have pioneered this work, for their honesty and willingness to resource records documentation projects that improve access to records – that work has meant so much to people.

We are very grateful to the Federal Government. Their continued support will ensure that the Find & Connect web resource remains a valuable and trustworthy source for those who were in care, and the generations who come after who will know their story.

My greatest thanks and appreciation goes to those who spent all or part of their childhood in children's Homes and institutions.

FIND & CONNECT WEB RESOURCE VISITOR STATISTICS

15 NOVEMBER 2011 – 1 JULY 2014

How many people visited the web resource during this time?

356,325 PEOPLE

28.10% of these people came back to the web resource more than once giving a total of

495,510 VISITS

Where in Australia were people when they visited the web resource?

TOP 25 CITIES AND TOWNS:

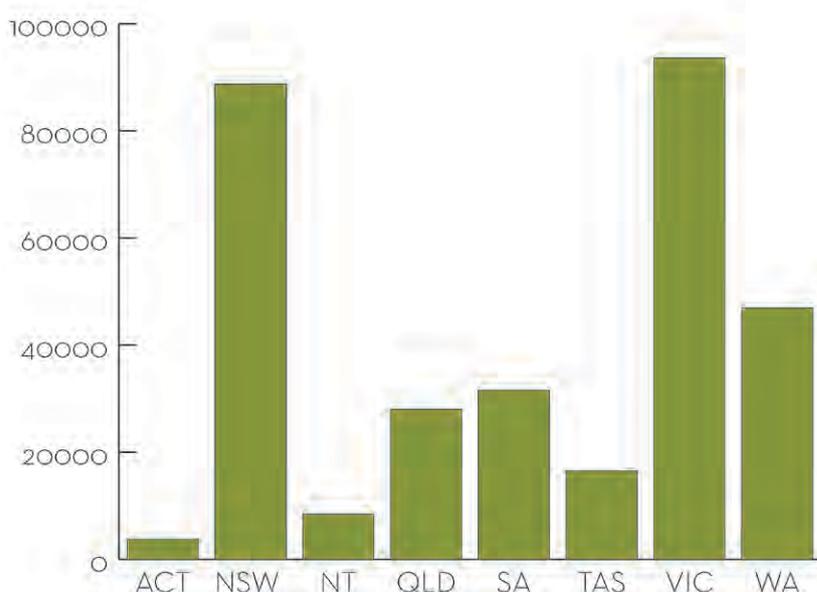
| City | Visits |
|-------------------|---------|
| 1 Melbourne | 132,453 |
| 2 Sydney | 121,847 |
| 3 Brisbane | 54,953 |
| 4 Perth | 45,227 |
| 5 Adelaide | 35,586 |
| 6 Canberra | 13,251 |
| 7 Hobart | 9,334 |
| 8 Newcastle | 2,182 |
| 9 Gold Coast | 2,171 |
| 10 Darwin | 2,037 |
| 11 Cranbourne | 1,724 |
| 12 Launceston | 1,414 |
| 13 Geelong | 1,292 |
| 14 Richmond (NSW) | 1,114 |
| 15 Ballarat | 1,057 |
| 16 Craigieburn | 816 |
| 17 Central Coast | 775 |
| 18 Wollongong | 685 |
| 19 Bendigo | 670 |
| 20 Toowoomba | 429 |
| 21 Cairns | 420 |
| 22 Melton | 396 |
| 23 Sunshine Coast | 394 |
| 24 Townsville | 382 |
| 25 Dubbo | 358 |

On average people viewed 4.33 pages per session giving a total of

2,146,595 PAGE VIEWS



How many people looked for information about each state and territory?



Visitor statistics from Google Analytics © 2014 Google