



FIND & CONNECT FACT SHEET

SEARCHING FOR RECORDS OF A PARENT OR GRANDPARENT

A web resource for people who experienced out of home 'care'

This information is for people who are searching for records about their parent or grandparent. It may be helpful for anyone doing family history research about people who spent time in orphanages, children's homes or other institutions.

ELIGIBILITY FOR FIND & CONNECT SUPPORT SERVICES

The Find & Connect support services are for people who were in children's Homes, orphanages and foster care in Australia, from the 1920s up to 1989. For many people, the journey of accessing records will be about more than the person who grew up in 'care' – the records about the person's parents, siblings and other family members can also contain vital information. Many people who have a close relative who was in a children's institution want to access these records, to understand more about their family and their past.

The Find & Connect support services are under considerable demand – people wanting to access records about a family member may not be eligible for help with searching. Calling the Find & Connect support service to discuss your situation is a good first step – 1800 16 11 09.

This factsheet contains information that can help you to locate and access these records yourself.

STARTING OUT

If you know the name of the Home, then you can go straight to the relevant Find & Connect page for more information. The entries on Find & Connect can help you find out more about the history of the Home, and where any records are located. [Look for Homes \[https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/look-for-homes\]](https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/look-for-homes) on Find & Connect.

But if you're not sure about the name of the Home, identifying which institution your parent or grandparent was in can take a bit of detective work. Many people start with only small pieces of information, a bit like a jigsaw puzzle.

When you're starting out, it's good to know a little bit about how the child welfare system worked in the relevant state or territory. For example, in some states where the state government department organised most care placements it makes sense to look at government records first. In other states, where many placements were likely to be arranged more informally by churches or charities (known as "voluntary" or "[private placements](https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/australia/biogs/FE00071b.htm)" [https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/australia/biogs/FE00071b.htm]), the records you need might not be

in government archives. For more information, see: [Historical Background \[https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/resources/historical-background-about-child-welfare\]](https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/resources/historical-background-about-child-welfare) about Child Welfare. A good way to start is by writing down everything you already know. Can you answer any of the following questions?

- Where was the home located? (eg: State, City, Suburb)
- When was your parent or grandparent there?
- Was the home linked with a church or a religion?
- Did it take boys, girls or both?
- How old were the children there?

You might be able to ask your parent or grandparent these questions. If not, it might be helpful to ask other family members what they know or remember.

FIND THE HOME(S) ON FIND & CONNECT

Once you have done your preparation, go to [Search this Site \[https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/browse\]](https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/browse) and search for the home/s your parent or grandparent was in.

If you know the name of the home, type it in the Quick Search field.

Or, you can make a shortlist of homes. Start with typing something general in the Quick Search field (eg "Parramatta", "Catholic", "orphanage"), and then use the options on the left-hand side to narrow down your search results (eg to only look at homes in a particular state, or homes that operated at a particular time). For more information see [How to use this Site \[https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/help/factsheet-1-how-to-use-the-website\]](https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/help/factsheet-1-how-to-use-the-website).

You can also browse alphabetical lists of Homes in each state or territory.

You may need to make a shortlist of the homes that fit the information you have.



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RELATIVES WHO WERE WARDS OF THE STATE

If your parent or grandparent was made a [ward of the state](https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/australia/biogs/FE00010b.htm) [https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/australia/biogs/FE00010b.htm], there may be government-held records about them. If you are fairly confident your parent or grandparent was a state ward, it may be best to start your search by applying for access to what's known as their ward file, which might also be called a children's file or a [client file](https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/australia/biogs/FE00128b.htm) [https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/australia/biogs/FE00128b.htm].

If you are not sure, it might help to read a bit more about the Homes they lived in. For example, if you find they were placed in a government-run institution, or if they passed through a government [reception centre](https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/australia/biogs/FE00129b.htm) [https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/australia/biogs/FE00129b.htm] then it's likely your parent or grandparent was a ward of the state. In each state or territory, there is a government department whose job it is to respond to requests for access to the records of state wards.

MULTIPLE PLACEMENTS

It's important to know that there might be records about a person's time in care in multiple locations, and held by multiple organisations. If your relative was a ward of the state, there will likely be government records, but if they were placed in non-government Homes, these organisations might have kept records as well. You will need to make separate applications for records held by different organisations.

FOSTER CARE

If your parent or grandparent was in foster care, your search will be a bit different. You are not going to find the name and address of their foster home on Find & Connect. However, it's likely that your relative spent at least some time in a children's home or institution, while awaiting placement, or between placements. If your parent or grandparent was a ward of state, there might be government records about their time in care, including details of foster care placements.

FORMER CHILD MIGRANTS

If you know that your parent or grandparent came to Australia as a child migrant, that will help you narrow down your search of homes. The [Former Child Migrants fact sheet](https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/resources/former-child-migrants) [https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/resources/former-child-migrants] has more information about how to find records.

READ ABOUT RECORDS FROM THE HOME(S)

Once you have found the Find & Connect webpage for the Home, click the "Records" tab where you can find out who to contact to apply for access, and read a description of the organisation's collection. Please be aware Find & Connect does not hold anyone's records or private information - to access your family member's records, you will need to contact the record-holders directly.

It's also important to remember that Find & Connect lists information provided by record-holding organisations - these descriptions are not exhaustive and you may find the organisation has more records than listed on Find & Connect. Equally, you may find that the organisation has very minimal records, or that it has stored its records in another place, such as a library or archive.

Records about children in care are controlled by legislation. Your rights to access information will depend on factors such as your relationship to the person and whether the person is still living, as well as the policy of the organisation that holds the records. For more information, see [What are my rights to access records about me and others?](https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/resources/what-to-expect-when-accessing-records/#8) [https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/resources/what-to-expect-when-accessing-records/#8]

PROOF OF IDENTITY

Different organisations will have different access policies and procedures. In all cases, when applying for records about a relative, you will need to provide some documentation proving your identity (e.g. driver's license, birth certificate, health care card) and your relationship to the person who was in care (for example, a birth certificate). Some organisations will require either proof of the person's death, or if they are still living, the person's permission for you to access their records.