Dear Ms Westcott

The Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA) welcomes the opportunity to provide the following input to implementing the Living Longer Living Better aged care reform package and the overview of proposed changes to the Aged Care Act 1997 and related legislation. AFA congratulates the Federal Government for helping older people to stay in their own homes under the proposed changes.

Approximately 500,000 Forgotten Australians are fast approaching the need for aged care supports. In a scoping study undertaken by the Department of Health and Ageing (DOHA) during 2010, Forgotten Australians reported their fear of the prospect of returning to institutional residential settings as they become frail and age. Many indicated a strong desire to stay in their own homes due to their adverse experiences in institutional settings during childhood. The study also found that the aged care sector was not cognisant of Forgotten Australians, their history, the lifelong impacts and their special needs. A copy of the final report Development of a National Education Package for the Improving Aged Care for Forgotten Australians Project, December 2012, is attached. (Attachment A.)

About the Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA)

AFA is a national group of organisations and individuals which advocates for and promotes the interests of the estimated 500,000 people (Forgotten Australians) across Australia, who as children, experienced serious abuse (emotional, psychological, physical and sexual) and exploitation, in institutions, orphanages and other out-of-home care settings in the last century.

AFA has also produced educational material that is being distributed through the aged care sector in limited locations and when services request more information. These resources Forgotten Australians: Life Stories, a DVD launched in August this year by Minister Jenny Macklin, MP, and the booklet Forgotten Australians: Supporting survivors of childhood institutional care in Australia, 3rd Ed., are accessible via the website www.forgottenaustralian.org.au
Forgotten Australians’ stories of childhood abuse include what would constitute criminal behaviour towards children, as well as organisations neglecting their duty of care. The individual histories and other forms of evidence have been documented in many Australian government reports (State, Territory and Commonwealth), in particular, the 2004 Senate report, Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-or-home care as children. ¹

Aged care engagement

Ms Caroline Carroll, Chair, AFA, has worked closely with the DOHA on the Forgotten Australians Aged Care Education Project since February 2010. AFA members are concerned that this project has not yet been launched. The project was developed in response to the then Prime Minister’s Apology to Forgotten Australians, November 2009. The education project has been through an extensive process with a reference group comprising key stakeholders among Forgotten Australians, former Child Migrants and Stolen Generations, which aimed to raise awareness across the aged care sector about Forgotten Australians and their special needs.

As a result of engagement in this project, Ms Carroll has been providing education to improve service responses for Forgotten Australians in the greater Melbourne metropolitan area. However, AFA is aware that the aged care sector remains largely ignorant of this very large and rapidly ageing cohort. In recent weeks it has been confirmed that the National Aged Care Alliance members were unaware of Forgotten Australians as a special needs cohort recognised under the Allocation Principles 1997 and amended in December 2009.

AFA wishes to see as a matter of priority, a NATIONAL AGEING AND AGED CARE STRATEGY for Forgotten Australians developed and in place as the aged care reforms come into effect. With the imminent changes to the Aged Care Act 1997, special needs and additional supports need to be factored in to help Forgotten Australians remain in the community and be recognised in aged care reform processes. Our recommendations drawn from previous discussions with Minister Mark Butler are attached for your consideration (Attachment B.)

On behalf of AFA, I anticipate the AFA membership being of assistance in the future development of a National Ageing and Aged Care Strategy for Forgotten Australians.

Yours sincerely,

Caroline Carroll
Chair

Recommendations: for ageing Forgotten Australians/care leavers

A Identifying Forgotten Australians

Recommendations:

i. Collect data pertaining to the needs and requirements of the Forgotten Australians as a specific group, in areas such as: housing; physical, mental and dental health; social welfare; drug and alcohol services.

ii. Urgent development of a Forgotten Australians identity and health services access card, to enable better access to health and allied health, palliative and funerary care, and community services - similar to the DVA Gold Card.

iii. Utilise Medicare and Centrelink client registration processes to capture data and provide reporting on Forgotten Australians, to improve service mapping. This would improve the provision of targeted and appropriate services in States and Territories, and across urban, regional and remote locations.

iv. Encourage collaboration between the aged care sector and the Forgotten Australians Aged Care Education project reference group, to foster greater awareness and understanding of ageing Forgotten Australians issues in future national legislative and planning aged care exercises.

B Understanding and Responsiveness

Recommendations:

i. The 'Forgotten Australians Aged Care Education Package' needs to target community aged care and welfare services, as well as discharge from hospital programs such as: hospital in the home, palliative care, Home and Community Care; as well as gateways to the community aged care and accommodation sectors. This needs to be prioritised urgently.

ii. Provision for 'Priority Access' in services for Forgotten Australians. The disadvantage experienced by Forgotten Australians as a group, because of their lack of adequate health care, education and care and support as children, needs to be acknowledged as a social inclusion issue.

iii. Utilise Medicare and Centrelink client information systems to provide Fact Sheets about Forgotten Australians to encourage their access to aged care, health and wellbeing services.

iv. Improve understanding across the aged care sector about 'special needs' provisions for Forgotten Australians under the Allocations Principles 1997, (amended December 2009.)

v. Adopt flexible approaches across aged care professionals and front line workers to Forgotten Australians in light of their history of childhood abuse, trauma and disconnection from family and society, which many Forgotten Australians have experienced.

vi. Acquire greater skills across the aged care sector in respectful and nonstigmatising ways of identifying vulnerable groups; to strengthen person-centred approaches particularly during intake assessment processes.

vii. For the aged care sector to encourage flexibility in definitions of 'family' for Forgotten Australians; 'family of choice' or other terms may be more appropriate, as many have not had success in maintaining lifelong relationships nor have extended family supports.
Community aged care is predicated on having strong family and social supports which this 'special needs' group does not necessarily have.

**C Flexible community-based living arrangements**

**Recommendations:**

i. Provision of additional financial support for the Forgotten Australians aged cohort to enable better access to community and residential aged, as well as allied health.

ii. Require all aged care accommodation facilities to meet nationally consistent basic safety standards such as required in other public buildings e.g. fire safety systems.

iii. Create national understanding and approaches to flexible building codes and designs and social housing projects similar to 'Common Ground'. There need to be common understandings across local and state governments to ensure nationally consistent approaches and understanding for 'special needs' groups.

**D Standards of aged care for vulnerable citizens**

**Recommendations:**

i. Service providers need to be educated and understand the mental health issues attached to childhood trauma.

ii. Forgotten Australians as a vulnerable 'special needs' population need to have peer advocates to assist with educating Forgotten Australians on accessing appropriate ageing services, support for navigating the aged care system; to assist with utilising complaints-mechanism.

iii. Support Forgotten Australians to have control over defining their aged care needs and in choosing the relevant aged service options for them.

iv. A dedicated Forgotten Australians Human Rights Commissioner to investigate abuses and poor standards in care and support for Forgotten Australians; similar to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner.

v. National investment in trauma-informed practice and approaches, particularly for adult survivors of childhood trauma, to help facilitate safe and holistic support and service cultures for vulnerable groups.

**E Greater national and cross-border cooperation**

**Recommendations:**

i. For the Commonwealth through COAG, to resolve the issue of cross-border service provision, preferably by ensuring that the highest standards of service provision are available in each State and Territory and by implementing a brokerage system or central funding body to enable Forgotten Australians to access State and Territory based services, regardless of where they live.

ii. Investigate demands by Medicare and other Government agencies to obtain refunds from Forgotten Australians from the redress funds they may have been eligible for, where redress has been made available.

19 December 2012