

Diverse Needs: Care Leavers

Care leavers are people who spent their childhood in foster care, orphanage, institutions or care outside of their family. Over 500,000 Australians experienced this before the 1989 policy change. Children were removed since colonial times due to poverty, race, illness or disability and family breakdown. Many suffered neglect and abuse in institutions and this still affects their lives today. They might call themselves Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants, Stolen Generations, or state wards.

Experience of disadvantage

Growing up in care has left many care leavers with long-term difficulties. Abuse and trauma add to health problems with depression, anxiety and grief. They had poor education, making it hard to get a job. They find it difficult to build relationships. Over time, this has led to poor health outcomes and social isolation.

The impact on end-of-life care

Many care leavers don't trust institutions and health services. When facing old age and the end of life, they may feel scared or powerless and react with emotional distress. They need care that understands their past trauma and makes them feel safe, respected and in control.

Complex overlaps

Some care leavers struggle with mental health issues, substance abuse, and are homeless. A lack of support and understanding makes life harder for care leavers.

See the [Alliance for Forgotten Australians'](#) guides on caring for care leavers.

Download this booklet by the [Department of Health, Disability and Ageing](#) about caring for care leavers.

