

Life Inside Now on Display

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A new exhibition opening today sheds light on one of the darkest chapters in our nation's history.

Inside: Life in Children's Homes and Institutions at the National Museum of Australia tells the story of what it was like for the half million children who were wards of the state in church and government run institutions from the 1920s to the 1980s.

Many of the former residents of these institutions now identify as Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants, mainly from Britain following the Second World War.

"This exhibition continues the national recognition of these childhood experiences that the former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's National Apology to Forgotten Australians created two years ago," says Karyn Walsh, Coordinator of Micah Projects, Brisbane provider of support and advocacy services to Forgotten Australians.

The exhibition has collected artefacts, stories, photos, artwork, poems, songs and articles to illustrate the often bleak and abuse-ridden life of institutional care and the lasting impact this had on Forgotten Australians and their families.

"It is great to see Queenslanders engaged in supplying artefacts and recording their histories for the exhibition. It is so important to the story of our nation that these experiences become embedded in the fabric of Australian history," says Karyn.

Former resident and prominent Forgotten Australians advocate, Allan Allaway, believes that the exhibition should be utilised by universities and colleges training the next generation of child protection workers.

"The exhibition must be an important tool in the training and educating of social workers and those involved in having the responsibility to take care of the innocent children," says Allan.

"We the Forgotten Australians believe that this history is important, not only to the Forgotten Australians, but to the whole country," says Allan.

"It must never be forgotten or locked away."

Inside: Life in Children's Homes and Institutions is on at the National Museum of Australia, Canberra, from 16 November 2011 to 26 February 2012. Admission is free.

www.forgottenaustralianshistory.gov.au/exhibition

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