

Media release

14 November 2024

Forgotten Australians to March Through Richmond to Mark the 15th Anniversary of the National Apology

Forgotten Australians are invited to join a commemorative march in Richmond this Friday 15 November, to mark the 15th Anniversary of the National Apology to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants. More than 500,000 Forgotten Australians were placed into institutional or other out-of-home care before 1990, with many experiencing abuse, neglect, and trauma during their time in 'care.' On 16 November 2009, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd issued a formal apology on behalf of the Australian Government and the nation, to Forgotten Australians and children who arrived through historical child migration schemes and were subsequently placed in 'care'.

This Friday, Forgotten Australians, family members, supporters and special guests will gather at the Open Place Drop-In Centre (1/8 Brougham Place, Richmond) from 11:15am before marching approximately 500 metres to Citizens Park (corner of Church and Highett Streets, Richmond). This symbolic march will highlight the lasting emotional, social, and economic impacts of Forgotten Australians' institutional experiences, while honouring their resilience.

At Citizens Park, participants will gather under the verandah of the Jack Dyer Pavilion and on the adjacent oval to hear the National Apology, listen to guest speakers, and hear Forgotten Australians share their experiences through speech, song and poetry. The event, which includes a shared lunch, aims to foster a sense of community, reduce feelings of isolation, shame and worthlessness, and raise public awareness of Forgotten Australians' experiences, resilience and needs.

One Forgotten Australian described the march as a powerful opportunity to highlight the ongoing impacts of her and others' experiences.

'We want the community to understand our journey and history, and the impact of long-term trauma and family disconnection on children. We want to be seen, understood and not forgotten,' she said.

Mark Opitz AM, a legendary Australian record producer and fellow Forgotten Australian, recently shared this [video message](#) encouraging Forgotten Australians to participate in the march, noting the importance of keeping the memory alive of what it means to be institutionalised as a child.

As a result of their past experiences, many Forgotten Australians continue to struggle with complex issues including physical and mental health, financial instability, housing, employment, and family relationships. Open Place works to address these challenges by providing support services, access to healthcare, and pathways to education and employment.

Michelle McDonald, Senior Manager Open Place, said that the march was an example of the ongoing work being done to support Forgotten Australians.

'We're committed not only to providing essential services but also to advocating for recognition, justice, and further targeted support for Forgotten Australians, so they have the foundations they need for healing and resilience,' Ms McDonald said.

This march is supported by Yarra City Council, funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services, and organised by Open Place and Relationships Australia Victoria. For those with mobility challenges, wheelchairs and motor vehicles will be available upon prior arrangement with Open Place. Victoria Police will assist with safely crossing Church Street, and St John Ambulance will provide first aid support as needed.

For more information and to access Open Place services, free call 1800 779 379 or visit openplace.org.au.

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Media enquiries

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