

Apology to children in institutional care

During the last century over 500,000¹ Australians experienced all or part of their childhood in an orphanage, State institution, children's home or some other form of State care.

The treatment of these children in care was examined by two government inquiries:

- The Senate report into Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children (Forgotten Australians, August 2004).
- The National Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, established in 2013 with the final report released in late 2017.

These reports provided thousands of examples of the emotional, physical and sexual abuse commonly suffered by children in the care of the State and children's agencies. Abuse withstanding, the life of a child in institutional care was often deprived of familial connection, security and comfort.

Since 1874 The Infants' Home has been providing services to assist Australia's most vulnerable. We are proud of our extensive history and dedication to improve the lives of young children and families. These services have included: residential (or institutional) care, a domestic violence shelter, foster care, childcare and other support services.

Over the past 150 years, philosophies of children's welfare have changed. The Infants' Home acknowledges that past practice may not align with modern understandings and expectations. Our history shows that we have always tried to innovate to align with changing times, including being the first organisation of our kind in Australia to transition out of residential care, becoming a long day care service.

The Infants' Home supports the government findings into Institutional care and believe the experiences people have shared about their time in institutional care. We strongly encourage anyone negatively affected by their time in our care to share their story with us.

And to those people we would like to offer this apology:

The Infants' Home apologises unreservedly for any physical, psychological, sexual, emotional or social harm that children and/or their mothers may have experienced while in care with us. We acknowledge the impact this had on their physical and emotional wellbeing.

The Infants' Home is dedicated to learning lessons from the past. We deeply regret any negative impact from past children's welfare philosophies and societal practices. We are committed to working with our care leavers, government and other agencies to respond to any injustices children experienced in institutional care.

¹ (2004) Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children - https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/Completed_inquiries/2004-07/inst_care/report/index