
A Tribute to the Historical Abuse Network and all who have experienced abuse in institutions, foster care and detention centers.

Remembrance Day, September 2017

Karyn Walsh



MICAH PROJECTS



**Breaking Social Isolation
Building Community**



Presented Remembrance Day, September 2017 by
Micah Projects CEO Karyn Walsh AM Hon.DSocWk and Nurs Qld
Photography: Craig Holmes.

*“We pay tribute to each
of you with us today.
We remember those who
have passed away and
those at home.”*

*The following speech was presented
by Karyn Walsh, Remembrance Day 2017*

A tribute to the Historical Abuse Network and
all individuals who have experienced abuse in
institutions, foster care and detention centers.

Remembrance Day 2017 falls within the last year of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Australia. The Royal Commission has brought national attention to the prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse and related issues within institutional settings: institutions which were established to care for, protect, nurture and educate children.

Instead, cultures of neglect and secrecy were created for the purpose of protecting institutions, and covering up criminal activities and abuse of power, leaving the legacy of lifetimes of pain and loss for victims and survivors of the abuse.

Many reports have validated that abuse and crimes did occur, as well as the impact on children throughout their adult life.

The Royal Commission has had the power and mandate to put on public record the responses and, in many cases, the cover-ups by the institutions when abuse and or crimes were reported by children or other adults.

We pay tribute to each of you with us today. We remember those who have passed away and those at home.

As survivors, as family members, as citizens, you have given Australia and Queensland great gifts.

Firstly, by reclaiming yourselves as active citizens in our democracy. You have done this despite the legacy and ongoing impact of trauma from childhood abuse, the loss of opportunity, the companion of post-traumatic stress, and the deep anguish of an injustice that had been done. You have, with each Inquiry and opportunity, come forward again and again to be heard, and to educate.

Secondly, by demanding and bringing about corrective action by governments and institutions that were set up to protect and care for you as children. Instead they neglected you and enabled physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and abuse of power to occur whilst protecting the institution over your vulnerability as a child.

You lived your childhood or some years of your childhood in orphanages, boarding schools, foster care or other out-of-home care arrangements.

You participated in faith communities, community organisations and sporting organisations.

You were placed in detention centers with inappropriate orders for your protection.

Your options were determined by Government Policy and family circumstances...

- » Through the idea of rescuing Indigenous children from their families and culture. (*Bringing them Home Report, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.*)
- » From mothers who did not have the means to economically support a family.

- » From fathers who did not have options to care for children and work.
- » From orphanages or poor mothers in England through the immigration policy that saw children sent to Australia to help populate the country and assist with pastoral (farming) duties and domestic assistance. (*Lost Innocents Righting the Record, Senate Community Affairs References Committee 2001*).
- » From forced adoptions of children from mothers. (*Community Affairs References Committee Feb 2012*).
- » From child protection where family neglect or abuse occurred.

“As survivors, as family members, as citizens: you have given Australia and Queensland great gifts.”



Auntie Carol giving the Welcome to Country, Remembrance Day
Brisbane, September 2017. Photography: Craig Holmes.

*“This community now
knows that the legacy
of your childhood is real,
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embedded in our history.
It is not in the disturbance
of your minds.”*

Adults: Survivors and Citizens

In your personal journey you have been:

- » **Breaking the silence.**
- » **Truth telling**, engaged in your own healing: remembering and releasing the secrets, seeking belief, and seeking acknowledgment and justice.
- » **Reclaiming your identity**, finding your family, your parents, your siblings, your children as the displacement of children continued across generations and across continents. Most importantly, having a voice.
- » **Educating the community.** Today we see the fruits of your persistence in educating the professional community from medics to social workers, therapists to community workers, lawyers to judges, policy makers and legislators. This community now knows that the legacy of your childhood is real, has had its impact and is embedded in our history. It is not in the disturbance of your minds.
- » **Living your lives with great diversity** across your local communities, your professions and your passions.
- » **Educating policy makers and funders** that healing is as much about access to counselling as it is to a range of other healing modalities. It is about access to creative arts, having a voice and seeking justice through correcting the public record. It is about law reform in the criminal or civil justice system, access to services, opportunity and resources in the community.

The loss of opportunity and legacy of your childhood is not just about your mind, but your whole person.

- » **Creating.** You have written books, painted pictures, built sculptures, taken photos and written songs. You have sung and you have danced. You have written poetry. You have engaged your minds, your bodies and spirit in restoring your self and engaging in community.
- » **Living lives like the Lotus flower.** A metaphor that you yourselves have adopted: from muddy water to a self cleansing beautiful flower above the water... describing your journey from adversity to hope.
- » **Over-represented** in and amongst populations experiencing homelessness, mental illness, chronic disease, prisons, drug and alcohol services. Your children or grandchildren are also over-represented in our current child protection system.
- » **Displaying your sense of humour** to give collective respite from the intensity that comes with bringing such personal experiences into the public arena.



*“...from muddy water to
a self cleansing beautiful
flower above the water”*

Together Creating a Roadmap of Advocacy

More than a library of inquiries

Whilst as individuals you felt isolated and unheard you began to connect as small groups, as the Ex-Residents Network and then the Historical Abuse Network. You gained more strength to your voice following the *Forde Inquiry*: in small local peer networks, state wide and national networks such as the Alliance of Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers Network. You are the members of all these, sometimes acting alone, sometimes together, sometimes not so together. You have never forgotten your rights as citizens to let your parliamentary representative know your message and your life experience.

You have identified so often when systems collude, injustice and abuse continues. As you have often said It takes a village to raise a child, and it takes a village to abuse one.

In Queensland, through the multiple inquiries into pedophilia, police corruption, allegations in detention centers, orphanages, foster care, boarding schools, faith communities and child protection, you have been the unseen witnesses, observers, informers and advocates.

Rebuilding Trust

For your engagement in this process of rebuilding institutional trust, or what others call moral repair, we pay tribute to you today so that it is no longer hidden.

This has been your gift to Australia and Queensland. Your passion for truth and justice has not only taken you beyond your own suffering and healing but taken us all on a journey that is at the heart of our democracy: a voice of all not just the powerful.

- » You have taken the time to learn about our democratic process, you have broken secrets, and you have become part of the global community through the internet. You have taken your voice to the Vatican, the English Parliament, the United Nations and Irish Government as well as in Australia and Queensland to governments and churches.
- » You have educated so many politicians about your childhood and the lasting impact and legacy of the abuse and crimes – the abuse of power which has impacted on your life.
- » You have participated in forums, prepared submissions to Inquiries and the Royal Commission. You are great researchers and problem solvers.
- » You have not let those in leadership ignore you. To advocate and be effective you need people in leadership willing to engage, to hear you and to problem solve with you - to let you in.
- » You have created allies with the media, local radios, national broadcaster, local reporters and journalists.
- » You have put forward solutions, resolutions, bills of parliament, policies and programs.
- » You have generously engaged with governments, churches, and NGOs to create apologies, redress, and opportunities.
- » You have consistently presented the limitations, the failure and the inadequate responses when needed.

Advocacy. It's not a solo act

To advocate and be effective you need people in leadership willing to engage, to hear you and to problem solve with you. You have not let those in leadership ignore you.

I know that as the Royal Commission ends you will be seeking new leadership closer to home here in Queensland. Leadership that will ensure the recommendations of the Royal Commission do not sit on a shelf but that the reform happens not as a solo act of government, but in partnership with you - the people with lived experience and reflecting the diversity of who you are.

You had your allies in government departments before, and you will continue to need them. Not to be your voice, but to listen to you and work with you in the reforms still needed.

Your greatest ally has been democracy itself. It is often said that four critical elements exist within a democratic framework: legitimacy, justice, freedom and power. Your lives and the lives of those who represent you in our Parliaments have been entwined.

Your voice has been given legitimacy, your efforts are creating justice (as slow as it has been), your freedom is bound up in your healing from the secrets of your past, and you have changed the power imbalance.

Institutions of power are now being held to account. Your realities are no longer able to be called lies, a psychiatric condition, the over-active imagination of a child or scurrilous lies. Your intent has always been to create justice and we applaud your courage and determination.



Top left: (from left) Sue Treweek, Nelly Bliss, Rhonda Trivett and Patricia Willmot at the official hanging of the 2010 Queensland Government Apology to children abused in adult psychiatric care. (The framed apology was hung for permanent display near the Parliamentary Annexe entrance in March, 2013.)

Bottom left: Pearl Andrewartha and Ken Waldron at the opening of the traveling exhibition 'Inside: Life in Children's Homes and Institutions', Queensland Museum, Brisbane 2014.

Above: Rodger Brand, Dawn Daylight, Kevin Dunn and Katie McGuire at the Lotus Place music group.

*"Whilst as individuals
you felt isolated and
unheard you began to
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Advocacy. It's not a silo act.

You have influenced:

- » Five Premiers and Opposition Leaders,
- » Five Prime Ministers and Opposition Leaders,
- » 12 State Ministers and Shadow Ministers, Senators and multiple Members of Parliament.

You met every month for eight years to bring about the recommendations of the *Forde Inquiry*.

Your allies in the Senate, Clair Moore and Andrew Murray have continued to be your allies following the Community Affairs Senate Inquiry Reports.

You have phoned Bishops and Archbishops across denominations.

You have protested outside churches where there was no access to democratic process.

You phoned the Pope.

When you couldn't get through, you called international phone directory, got put through and spoke each week to those who provided domestic duties to the Pope in the hope that they would tell him. You have never doubted the sphere of influence any one person may have.

You have done leadership training and advocacy training, learned computer skills and written letters.

You have sent emails, you have made phone calls, you have visited personally so many Members of Parliament and so generously given your personal accounts, the impacts and the solutions, and change you want to see.



Left: Sculpture by artist Gavan Fenelon, Roma Street Parklands, Brisbane.

Below: Juanita Burr with Former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd at the Find and Connect Service launch at Lotus Place, November 2012.





Making Justice is your Legacy

- » An Australian Government apology to Forgotten Australians.
- » An apology from the Prime Minister of England to British Child Migrants.
- » A Queensland Government and Church Leaders Apology: Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions in Adult Mental Health Institutions and Forced Adoptions.
- » Multiple Apologies from Churches: Catholic, Anglican, Uniting Church, Salvation Army, Baptist and their dioceses or local jurisdictions.
- » A memorial at Emma Miller Place, Brisbane recognising abuse in institutional and out-of-home care and a memorial at Kurilpa, South Brisbane recognising abuse in detention centres.
- » Memorials across Australia in Perth, Melbourne, Adelaide, Sydney following a Senate Committee Report on Forgotten Australians.
- » A National Oral History project and a National Museum Exhibition (which still needs a permanent home).
- » Resource Centers and services across Australia. Lotus Place in Queensland was the first, with Wattle Place (NSW), Open Place (Victoria) and Tuart Place (WA).
- » Law Reform: Removal of Civil Litigation Time Limitation Period.
- » Child Protection Reforms that have not yet gone far enough in strengthening families and preventing removal of children in the first place.

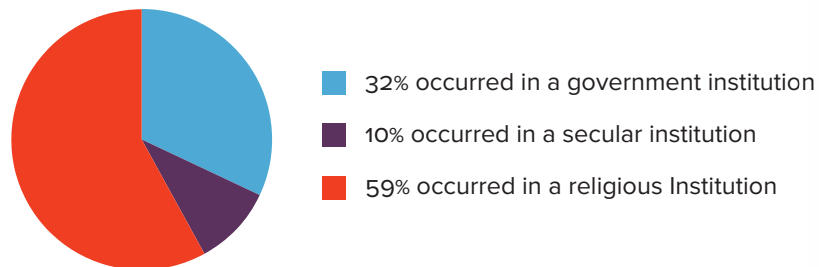
Left: Lotus Place Participants with Catherine Mundy at the 2017 Songs of Justice Concert.

» Parliamentary Inquiries and Royal Commissions in Victoria, South Australia, NSW and Tasmania.

As Queenslanders you can be proud that you were one of the first to give witness through the Forde Inquiries and other Inquires in the 1990s around child sexual abuse in Queensland.

You have been part of all this not just for yourself but for so many Australians who shared the painful reality of the impacts of childhood abuse, secrecy and lack of accountability.

Of abuse reported to the Royal Commission



Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

In May this year Justice Peter McLennan spoke to the National Council of Churches.

At that time, the Royal Commission had held 57 public hearings, examined 1.2 million documents, heard evidence from 1,200 witnesses, held public hearings with a policy focus and generated 44 research papers.

To date 40,231 calls have been handled, 24,480 letters and emails received and 7,509 private sessions with survivors have been held. 2,340 matters have been reported to authorities including police and 127 prosecutions have commenced as of May 2017.

32% of survivors who attended private sessions reported abuse in Catholic Church institutions, 9% Anglican, 4% Salvation Army, 3% other protestant institutions, 2% in Presbyterian and Reformed church institutions, 1.3% Uniting Church, 1% Jehovah Witness, 0.6% Baptist, 0.5% Pentecostal, 0.4% Churches of Christ, 0.4% Seventh Day Adventist and 0.3% Lutheran.

A Redress report has been released recommending a National Redress Scheme resulting in current negotiations about a Commonwealth Redress Scheme by the Australian Government.

Your input as always is in identifying the limitations, voicing your expectations and concerns and seeking justice from all stakeholders including Queensland and other state governments for all forms of abuse in out-of-home care, faith institutions and communities.



The Youth Detention Commemoration by artist Gavan Fenelon, Corner of Boundary Street and Riverside Drive, Kurilpa Point, South Brisbane.

Thank you

There is a saying that we often use from Margaret Mead:

"Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has."

You are evidence of the wisdom of this.

We pay tribute to your strength and spirit, your courage and determination and your active citizenship to rebuild trust in our institutions that are entrusted with the care of children and the vulnerable in our society.

As that small group of committed citizens you have brought to life another often quoted aspiration:

"The moral test of government is how government treats those who are at the dawn of life, the children, those who are at the twilight of life, the elderly; those who are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy and those with a disability." – Hubert H Humphrey, US Politician

You have lived through all these phases of life across your lifespan and you deserve the attention of our governments.

...and in the words of a long-time advocate:

"it ain't over yet!" – Allan Allaway.

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