



Australian Government

Department of Social Services

Families and Communities Program

**Find and Connect Support Services
Operational Guidelines**

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Preface

On 16 November 2009, the Australian Government formally apologised to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants for the pain and suffering experienced by so many children last century while in out-of-home 'care' and throughout their lives.

As part of the apology, the Australian Government announced the introduction of Find and Connect services, which includes a broad range of activities with the objective of improving the lives of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants.

To date, the Find and Connect appropriation has achieved:

- The delivery of a national network of Find and Connect Support Services including:
 - A national 1800 telephone number – 1800 16 11 09 for Care Leavers to call to make the initial 'first steps' to ask for support.
 - Specialised trauma informed counselling services for Care Leavers, from appropriately trained and skilled professionals.
 - Specialised records search and support services to provide practical assistance to Care Leavers.
- Strengthened [sector representation](#) and support through funding for the Alliance for Forgotten Australians Incorporated (AFA), the Care Leavers Australasia Network (CLAN), and the International Association of Former Child Migrants and their Families (the International Association) and Child Migrants Trust (CMT).
- The delivery of a [National Find and Connect web resource](#) to help Care Leavers find records held by past providers and government agencies. Records collections and organisations listed on the Find and Connect web resource are continually updated.
- Find and Connect Records Access Documentation grants to assist past and current providers to index records to increase accessibility for Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants to their records.
- Research into Freedom of Information, Privacy and Right to Information legislation and practices.
- Development of a set of national records access [Principles and Guidelines](#) for Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants, published in June 2015.
- An aged care information package for Care Leavers, developed by the Department of Health and released on 15 December 2016. The [Caring for Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants and Stolen Generations Information Package](#) shows how early life experiences can affect older people receiving care and help care providers respond to their needs.
- Ensuring this dark chapter in Australia's history is never forgotten through the:
 - The National Museum of Australia exhibition - [Inside: Life in Children's Homes and Institutions](#) and education package for senior secondary students (Years 10 to 12).
 - The National Library of Australia's [Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants Oral History Project](#).

These Operational Guidelines are for the Find and Connect Support Services, funded by the Department of Social Services (the department), and have been developed for providers to work in a nationally consistent, coordinated and cooperative way. They outline the key elements of service delivery, and seek to clarify policy and process questions that may arise during the delivery of the Find and Connect services.

The Operational Guidelines should be read in conjunction with the:

- [Families and Communities Program: Families and Children Guidelines Overview](#)
- grant agreement
- [DSS Data Exchange Protocols](#).

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1 Find and Connect Support Services

1.1 Overview

Find and Connect Support Services are a component of the Adult Specialist Support Sub-Activity under the Families and Children Activity. The Find and Connect component includes a support service in each state and territory, a national support service for Former Child Migrants, a national web resource to assist with records tracing and access, and representative organisations that are funded to support stakeholders and present consolidated views and advice to Government and the sector. The Find and Connect Support Services provide specialist counselling, referral services, peer and social support programs and assistance to locate and access records and reconnect with family members (where possible) for Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants. Find and Connect Support Services must work with the department in a collaborative and professional manner.

1.1.1 Target group

Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants - The target group for Find and Connect projects are Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants, defined as:

- **Forgotten Australians:** people who as children were placed in children's homes, orphanages and other forms of out-of-home 'care' before the end of 1989, by which time the process of de-institutionalisation had concluded (they are not contemporary care leavers) and
- **Former Child Migrants:** children who arrived in Australia through historical child migration schemes until 1970 and who were subsequently placed in homes and orphanages.

Note: The term 'Forgotten Australians' is re-traumatising for some people. This is important to acknowledge due to the regular use of this term throughout this document. Some Forgotten Australians prefer to be known as former state wards, 'Care Leavers', 'Clannies', 'Homies' or 'Wardies'.

1.2 Objectives

Find and Connect aims to improve social outcomes for Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants by assisting them to reconcile with their life stories and restore family relationships where possible.

Find and Connect aims to improve outcomes for Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants through ensuring:

- a shared vision between governments and service providers about improved access to records, and professional support and family reconnection for Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants
- the application of good practice principles in working with Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants to ensure their experiences are recognised
- system infrastructure is in place to support effective services through an emphasis on sector capacity building, workforce, partnerships, joined up service delivery, records release and performance measurement evaluation
- the implementation of multiple entry points into the service system
- services for Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants are seamless and portable across states/territories (that is, Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants are able to access Find and Connect Support Services regardless of where they were in care or their current location)
- appropriate governance arrangements at a national and state/territory level to support shared responsibility for services to Forgotten Australian and Former Child Migrants.

1.3 Principles

1.3.1 Networking/collaboration

Service providers must:

- network and collaborate in accordance with Section 2.7 of the [Families and Communities Program: Families and Children Guidelines Overview](https://www.dss.gov.au/grants/grant-programmes/families-and-children) (<https://www.dss.gov.au/grants/grant-programmes/families-and-children>)

- identify and develop linkages with other Find and Connect service providers across the Find and Connect network to increase capacity to respond effectively to support the needs of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants
- work with state/territory governments and agencies, past providers and other record holders to manage record request backlogs
- collaborate with, and provide supportive referrals to, mainstream services such as aged care, health, housing and dental services.

1.3.2 Client diversity

Find and Connect Support Services must provide flexible, culturally sensitive and accessible service delivery models and practices that ensure accessibility to any people who face a real or perceived barrier to receiving assistance, and have in place strategies to achieve this unless otherwise exempted by legislation. Service providers must be able to provide evidence of these strategies on request. Find and Connect Support Services must provide services equally, without bias or prejudgement about clients. Services must be accessible to all target groups, including Indigenous people and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

1.3.3 Design principles

The Find and Connect Support Services delivery design principles are that:

1. Clients drive the design of services and activities such as:
 - a. Location of services
 - b. Name of service
 - c. The building the service is delivered from
 - d. Set-up of service
 - e. Peer support and group activities (outings, educational and social groups including cooking).
2. A system for feedback loops is provided, including:
 - a. Consultation in groups and other accessible formats including for people living regionally and involved in support networks and activities
 - b. Consumer reference groups where Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants are part of the governance and evaluation of services
 - c. Surveys, newsletters, continuous feedback and other opportunities for 'checking in'
 - d. Options to inform and improve the service system.
3. The way services are offered includes that:
 - a. Clients drive the type and direction of support
 - b. Services are clear about what they do and how
 - c. Clients are the experts of their own lives.
4. Services offer flexibility in access, including options such as:
 - a. Offering a drop-in centre
 - b. Reaching out and taking support and consultation to people's 'turf', including streets and remote areas.
5. Services are respectful of the different histories and needs of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants and:
 - a. Promote self-determination, upholding client views that there should be 'nothing about us without us'
 - b. Give options so that people can make informed choices (e.g. giving the option to access support that is independent from past 'care' providers)
 - c. Advocate for client access to information that past 'care' organisations hold about them
 - d. Make referrals and advocate to mainstream services to create a common approach and understanding in delivering support.
6. Service providers employ specialist skilled staff to deliver services that:
 - a. Employ trauma-informed care principles
 - b. Minimise re-traumatisation
 - c. Promote healing

- d. Develop trust and relationships
- e. Take time to notice relevant information about clients, are curious, ask questions, are invitational to clients and do not tell clients what to do.

1.4 Promotion of services

Service providers must help raise awareness of their service availability, including through networks.

Service providers must make the details of their service publicly available, including on their agency's website and on the national Find and Connect web resource at a minimum. Providers are to consider alternative service promotional opportunities, including through peer support groups.

The department will promote the Find and Connect Support Services on the website at www.dss.gov.au.

1.5 Safety

The safety of all adults and children who visit or work for the Find and Connect service providers is paramount.

Service providers should:

- Give their staff clear safety policies and procedures in writing and provide staff with adequate support, training and resources to comply with those policies and procedures.
- Report to the department, within one working day, any critical incidents that may adversely impact clients, the delivery of services or the department. These may include but are not limited to: serious circumstances that endanger clients, staff or the service, or are likely to attract media attention; damaged property rendering a service inoperable; incidents that threaten the viability or day to day operations of the service; incidents that raise important public policy issues (for example, those requiring a legislative or program response); and any other incident that is likely to attract negative publicity or undermine public confidence in the individual service or service system. Note: This list does not identify all possible situations that may require reporting to the department. If in doubt, contact your Funding Arrangement Manager to discuss. For privacy reasons, you may wish to de-identify some information. (See also [Section 5.3](#))

2 Service Delivery

2.1 Activity overview

There are three types of Find and Connect services: the Find and Connect Support Services, the national Find and Connect web resource, and the Find and Connect representative organisations.

A description of each of the funded activities are detailed below.

2.1.1 Find and Connect Support Services

- Service providers provide support and services to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants including:
 - access to professional and specialist trauma-informed counselling
 - support to help locate and access records
 - referral to mainstream services
 - assistance to find and reconnect with family members, where possible (excluding funding of reunions)
 - peer support, education and social support programs
 - outreach to rural, regional and remote areas (and internationally for Former Child Migrants).
- Services will be delivered in a timely and professional manner between 9am and 5pm (local time), Monday to Friday, to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants from a specified Activity Service Area (as defined in the grant agreement).
- Service providers are required to:
 - Take carriage of the 1800 number (1800 16 11 09) for calls originating in the specified jurisdiction, which must:

- provide information, advice and warm referrals
 - be operational between 9am and 5pm (local time), Monday to Friday
 - be answered by an appropriately trained and skilled staff member (not an answering machine/service where practicable) during operational hours.
- Provide skilled staff to:
 - assist Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants locate their records
 - provide supported access and release of records
 - assist Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants to trace their families and reconnect with family, where possible and desired (Note: Travel and accommodation costs for family reunions are out of scope)
 - respond in a comprehensive and timely manner to requests for assistance related to records tracing generated from the Find and Connect web resource (www.findandconnect.gov.au)
 - provide relevant information stemming from work related to the records tracing and supported release process to the Find and Connect web resource team to inform the ongoing population of the web resource
 - establish professional and enduring relationships that are responsive to the client, to ensure continuity for the client when using Find and Connect Support Services
 - establish and provide outreach services to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants in rural, regional and remote areas in the specified jurisdiction.
 - Provide professional and specialist trauma-informed counselling (by counsellors professionally qualified in social work, psychology or a related discipline) for Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants to assist them with their experiences from time in care, and the consequential impacts on their relationships and functioning. If brokering counselling, services must advise clients of any association with past providers, and give clients the choice to engage with counsellors who are free of any association with past providers.
 - Develop, enhance and/or implement peer support and social support programs for Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants. This could include hosting an annual event to mark the anniversary of the National Apology to the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants.
 - Provide a welcoming, nurturing and comfortable environment from a location that is disability accessible and that cannot be associated with or mirror the physical environments in which Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants were in 'care'.
 - Deliver services to clients from outside the Activity Service Area when they present to their service/s.
- Service providers are required to:
 - Provide counsellors with access to professional development, supervision, support and debriefing processes.
 - Provide timely and appropriate information, advice, debriefing and supervision to brokered counsellors and outreach workers.

Brokerage

Find and Connect Support Service providers may provide brokered assistance to clients, with priority given to funding access to birth certificates, records applications, and brokered counselling services. Brokerage can also be used to meet critical support (including health and dental) needs of clients, where this is based on a needs assessment and meets the sub-activity's objectives of improving outcomes and enhancing wellbeing for people adversely affected by past institutional and child-welfare practices and policies. Brokerage cannot duplicate any state funded support of the same nature.

Brokerage principles

Where offering brokerage, service providers are required to follow these principles:

- The provision of brokerage support to clients can only be offered to registered clients, where service providers have capacity, and the brokered item or service has been assessed as meeting a **critical support need** outlined in the case management plan.
- Brokerage should be targeted to address issues that increase risk or vulnerability, that without it could contribute to poorer client outcomes. This includes responding to emerging issues (such as aging, or health concerns), or an extreme life event (such as eviction), but cannot be the only assistance provided to the client. Brokerage support must be provided as part of a client's holistic servicing.
- Service providers are responsible for developing their own brokerage policy, and should ensure provision of brokerage does not compromise the ability to deliver core services. It is suggested that for equity, service providers set financial year caps and place client brokerage limits, except for counselling. Transparency in brokerage policy and its application is encouraged.
- Brokerage should not be used to replace or duplicate other avenues of support or services that are available to the client, for example Commonwealth (e.g. Medicare, Emergency Relief), state and territory government funded services or schemes. It may only be provided as a last resort, once all other avenues for support have been exhausted. It is the service provider's responsibility to keep records that demonstrate all reasonable efforts have been undertaken to verify this.
- Brokerage should serve to extend accessibility of services such as counselling through an external provider, which may not otherwise be available (e.g. in regional or remote areas).
- Brokerage funds cannot be provided to a client directly. Service providers must pay the supplier on behalf of the client, and keep clear written records to account for how brokerage funds have been transferred, including evidence of expenditure, for five years.
- If brokerage support is used to assist with extreme financial distress, this must be a one-off, not available through Emergency Relief or other financial hardship schemes, and provided in conjunction with warm referral to financial counselling.
- Principles of equity, fairness, and value for money should be incorporated as necessary. Service providers should take all reasonable actions to ensure no fraud occurs.

Brokerage support cannot be used for:

- family reunions and visits
- travel and accommodation (except to attend the Find and Connect Support Service, counselling where phone counselling is not appropriate, or medical, dental appointments and treatment)
- ongoing debt management or personal debts such as fines
- non-essential items
- funerals
- activities or needs not covered in the case management plan
- items or services that are free or can be donated through other sources

- items or services covered by Commonwealth, state or territory government services, schemes or rebates, e.g. Medicare funded hospital treatment.

See [Section 3.2.2](#) for further information about Communication strategies regarding brokerage and interstate support.

Find and Connect Support Service for Former Child Migrants

The Find and Connect Support Services include a national support service (with relevantly qualified staff) to all Former Child Migrants living in Australia.

In accordance with Section 2.6 of the [Families and Communities Program: Families and Children Guidelines Overview](#), the service provider cannot use grant funding for overseas travel.

2.1.2 Find and Connect web resource – www.findandconnect.gov.au

The Find and Connect web resource is a searchable database with information about the record holdings of institutions that provided 'care' during the twentieth century. It is an entry point to assist Care Leavers to identify their institutions' record holdings. The web resource also contains practical advice about accessing support and help in obtaining personal records, and information about services for Care Leavers.

The web resource provider updates and manages:

- A national, searchable database of information about institutions (and other entities), publications, the location and status of existing records (including photographs) and information about the services that provide access to those records. This information is directly accessible to state and other Care Leaver services, and to Care Leavers themselves via the Find & Connect web resource homepage.
- Information pages containing practical advice about records searching, including accessing support and help in obtaining personal records; and information for record holders about how to best provide access and describe their records

No personal records or private information is published on the Find & Connect web resource

The web resource provider also conducts Records Access Documentation grants processes, where need is identified and funding is available.

As an Australian Government-branded website, the service provider is to work closely with the department in the design and delivery of the web resource, including publications.

2.1.3 Find and Connect representative organisations

Find and Connect representative organisations support Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants and present consolidated views and advice to government and the sector.

2.2 Eligible activities

Funding must only be used for the purposes for which it was provided as outlined in the grant agreement and Section 2.6 of the [Families and Communities Program: Families and Children Guidelines Overview](#).

2.3 Activity links and working with other agencies and services

Effective links with other agencies and services provide the opportunity to raise awareness broadly and on specific issues. Service providers must build and maintain effective relationships with a broad network of relevant services to ensure effective interaction with appropriate services.

Service providers must collaborate with other Families and Communities Program service providers and other organisations that support individuals and families, particularly Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants.

2.4 Specialist requirements

Service providers must comply with all relevant Commonwealth and state/territory legislation and regulations.

The needs of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants and the scope of services to be provided are broad and will require specialist skills and expertise including, but not limited to:

- Suitably qualified staff (including appropriate supervision) with trauma-informed counselling expertise will be required to respond to the complex emotional support and counselling needs of Forgotten Australians and/or Former Child Migrants.
- Staff suitably experienced in records tracing and family searches – expertise in this field is critical to provide effective service provision for Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants who are searching for their records.
- Understanding of historical policies and approaches to out-of-home ‘care’ in Australia including the effect these practices have had on Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants and their families, and how these practices may influence the future needs of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants.

3 Working with Clients

3.1 Client eligibility

Find and Connect Support Services are required to provide support to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants in a specified Activity Service Area (as detailed in the grant agreement), and to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants from outside the Activity Service Area when they present to their service. This includes people residing interstate or overseas, or who were raised interstate and now live locally. It also includes people presenting by phone or by email if they are living remotely, interstate or internationally.

3.1.1 No Wrong Door approach

All staff involved in responding to calls must be aware of how to determine who is eligible for Find and Connect (i.e. the target group of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants, (and their families), as defined in the [Glossary at Section 8](#)).

All Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants are eligible for Find and Connect Support Services, regardless of where they now reside. Identifying the service that is best placed to respond is the responsibility of the assessing staff, who can work this through with the individual client. This can be followed up by providing a warm or supportive referral, if a support service in another jurisdiction is better placed to meet the needs of the client.

Service providers may receive calls from people who are not eligible for the service. It is expected that warm or supportive referrals are provided where required.

3.1.2 Family support

The primary client group is Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants. However, family members may be included in counselling sessions if they form part of the primary client’s support system and would provide assistance for the client.

If family members seek support from the Find and Connect Support Services for themselves, they should be assisted as much as possible with a warm referral to relevant mainstream services, where appropriate.

There may be times when support can be provided to the family of a Forgotten Australian or Former Child Migrant (e.g. records searching if their parent has passed away, or assistance to find a sibling they were separated from if only one of them was in ‘care’).

3.1.3 Indigenous Australians

Indigenous Australians placed in out-of-home ‘care’ before the end of 1989, as defined in the [Glossary at Section 8](#), are eligible for assistance through the Find and Connect Support Services.

Indigenous Care Leavers may also be members of the Stolen Generations. In this instance, they may also be eligible for support through the Australian Government's national Link-Up program.

The Australian Government provides funding for counselling, family tracing and reunion services to members of the Stolen Generations through a network of Link-Up services across Australia. Currently there are Link-Up services in New South Wales, the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria, and Western Australia.

Indigenous Australians placed as children in children's homes, orphanages and other forms of out-of-home 'care' before the end of 1989, are eligible for Find and Connect Support Services regardless of whether they are also seeking support through Link-Up.

Service providers should make Indigenous clients aware of the culturally tailored support offered through Link-Up but should not restrict access to Find and Connect Support Services. Service managers are to note this point of clarification and ensure that eligible Indigenous Australians are provided access to Find and Connect Support Services.

3.1.4 Family migration schemes

Service providers may receive requests for support from individuals whose families were assisted to move from the UK to Australia in the 1960s by means of a family migration scheme. There are situations where, when the family arrived in Australia, they were placed into institutions and parents and children were placed in separate quarters.

Individuals who as children were subject to family migration schemes are not eligible for Find and Connect Support Services. Although the situation may have no doubt been distressing for the children and their parents temporarily placed separately (and the children may have experienced ill-treatment whilst in institutional care), they are not considered to be either Forgotten Australians or Former Child Migrants. Service providers will provide supportive referrals to 'out of scope' clients, including those who were subject to family migration schemes.

3.1.5 Incarcerated clients

Incarcerated Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants are eligible to receive support from Find and Connect Support Services. The Find and Connect Support Services grant agreements indicate that services are to provide 'outreach to rural, regional and remote areas'. This may also include people who might otherwise be limited in accessing the service because of individual restrictions, such as incarceration.

3.1.6 Verification of time in 'care'

Service providers may at times assist clients to obtain verification of their placement in 'care' before they know if they are eligible for the Find and Connect Support Services. Service providers make an assessment about clients' eligibility taking into consideration their experiences, the eligibility criteria and the information they gather about the records kept by the agencies possibly responsible for that person's time in 'care'. Some agencies destroyed records, some lawfully and some unlawfully, resulting in some instances where clients who have experienced out-of-home 'care' cannot obtain formal evidence of this. In these instances, service providers should provide services to clients where there are reasonable grounds for eligibility.

3.1.7 Length of time in 'care'

It is important that the client's needs are central to all service delivery and that services are flexible and responsive to the needs of each client. Length of time in 'care' is only one factor in considering the needs of a client and the impact of 'care' on an individual. Therefore, no member of the target group should be denied support based on the length of time they spent in 'care'. This can have been for short lengths of time such as day(s) and/or night(s), or longer periods such as weeks, months or years.

Following an initial assessment of the client's needs, service providers may judge that the client's circumstances make the client more suited to an alternative service – for example, a service aimed at more contemporary care leavers, or for people affected by adoption or forced adoption. In these

situations, the support service should discuss alternative services that are available with the client and, if the client agrees, provide a supportive referral to the alternative service.

3.2 Collaboration

3.2.1 Working collaboratively

Generally, it is expected a client will receive face-to-face support from their local service provider (i.e. the support service in the jurisdiction where they now reside).

If the client requires assistance with accessing records in another jurisdiction, the local support service should seek assistance from the support service in that jurisdiction. The department expects that services operate in a collaborative manner and that cross-jurisdictional assistance will be provided if requested (as per [Section 3.1.1](#)). Support services will agree on the type of assistance to be offered and the timeframe for providing the assistance. In instances where the agreed timeframes become unlikely to be met, the local service provider will be kept informed. If records searching efforts are exhausted and the agreed timeframe has not been met, the case will be referred to the managers of both services for resolution. The manager in the jurisdiction where the client was in 'care' may seek support from their Funding Arrangement Manager.

Results of records searches should be provided to the client by their local support service so that appropriate face-to-face supports can be in place. If a joint case management plan is to be developed for a client whose records are located in another jurisdiction, the local support service should be nominated as the lead service.

3.2.2 Communication strategies regarding interstate support

Find and Connect Support Services provide each other, and make publically available, information about the services they provide, including services funded by the state/territory government. This may include brokerage funding.

However, it is important that this information is communicated to clients and third parties in a way that does not build up expectations for additional support as most service providers integrate funding received from different sources in the support that they provide to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants.

Services wishing to negotiate access to another service provider's state-funded stream of a program should do so sensitively.

3.2.3 Communication regarding Find and Connect brokerage support

Find and Connect brokerage must be based on a critical needs assessment in the case management plan, and should not replace other avenues of support including state and territory funded schemes. Service providers may choose not to advertise brokerage to limit dependence on the program or manage expectations of entitlement by clients. (See [Section 2.1.1](#) for brokerage principles.)

3.2.4 Transitioning clients across jurisdictions

Some clients have received support from services funded by state governments prior to the implementation of Find and Connect. If that support has been provided in a jurisdiction other than where the client now resides, an assessment should be undertaken to determine whether the client's case can be transitioned to the local support service. Both service providers should agree on a transition plan in consultation with the client.

3.3 Trauma-informed approach to service delivery

Clients should be assessed and supported based on need, as identified and documented in a case management plan. The grant agreement requires services to provide trauma-informed counselling. Practice Roundtable discussions have identified that support services should also apply a trauma-informed approach across all aspects of service delivery for Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants.

These websites provide information and resources on evidence-based best practice in trauma-informed service delivery:

- [Blue Knot Foundation](https://www.blueknot.org.au/about-us/Our-Documents/Publications/Practice-Guidelines) (https://www.blueknot.org.au/about-us/Our-Documents/Publications/Practice-Guidelines)
- [National Center for Trauma-Informed Care and Alternatives to Seclusion and Restraint \(NCTIC\)](https://www.samhsa.gov/nctic/trauma-interventions) (https://www.samhsa.gov/nctic/trauma-interventions)

3.4 Consent (verbal/written)

Find and Connect Support Services agree that there are occasions when verbal client consent is sufficient and other occasions when written client consent is required.

Occasions when verbal consent is sufficient for a support service to respond to a client include:

- When a duty of care response is required (someone's wellbeing is at risk of harm).
- When a support service is undertaking a short-term piece of work for a client that is urgent (especially where distance is an issue) and/or where there are barriers to receiving signed consent. When appropriate, the support service staff will read out the consent form to the client and ask that they provide consent verbally. The time, date, purpose and duration of consent will then be clearly case noted.

Support services must document efforts to obtain signed consent. Consent is necessary to:

- Deal with third parties who are acting on behalf of a client.
- To initiate direct contact with a client who has been referred to their service by a third party.

3.5 Confidentiality

In order to maintain the trust of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants, service providers should carefully respect their clients' information, ensuring that identifying information about clients is only shared if consent is provided. Support services must observe the Australian Privacy Principles which establish standards for the collection, use, handling, storage and disclosure of 'personal information' and are contained in the *Privacy Act 1988* (Commonwealth). Service providers may wish to seek independent legal advice to clarify privacy obligations under the grant agreement.

Service providers should ensure clients are informed of the pros and cons associated with using DNA testing to search for family members, including privacy risks with raw DNA data, such as posthumous client data. It is recommended that service providers develop processes to manage client risks and expectations, including that 'found' family members may not consent to being contacted. The department recommends that only reputable genetic DNA testing companies that respect and value the privacy of testers are accessed.

3.6 Registering clients

It is a grant agreement requirement that Find and Connect clients are reported on the DSS Data Exchange system (see [Section 5](#) on reporting requirements).

It is critical that the department is able to accurately report on the progress of support services, and better understand how Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants are currently being supported. Not registering clients means the department is not receiving vital information about services and activities.

Support services that are finding any barriers to individually registering Find and Connect clients or that have concerns about registering them must raise the issues with the department so that the issues can be worked through to make the process more suited to their organisation.

The form that Find and Connect Support Services use to obtain client consent must include a section to enable clients' information to be registered on the DSS Data Exchange. Further details about protecting personal information are outlined in the [DSS Data Exchange Protocols](https://dex.dss.gov.au/data-exchange-protocols) (https://dex.dss.gov.au/data-exchange-protocols).

It is the goal that once clients are registered, support services can match up their data even if they move from one jurisdiction to another, to provide through-care support and quality coordinated care

responses. It can also mean that clients do not need to repeat their experiences to validate a service response.

3.7 Records searching

Searching and releasing of records will, in many situations, require the assistance of the national network of Find and Connect Support Services. Support services are encouraged to seek advice and support from their interstate colleagues who are local to where the records exist or where the client lives as they undertake to search for interstate records and when providing a supported records release (refer [Section 3.7.1](#)).

If support services have documented resource information procedures or fact sheets on records searching, they are encouraged to share them to provide the other support services with options in accessing interstate records. Support services are responsible for keeping this information up to date.

3.7.1 Supported release of records

Clients' rights to exercise self-determination in receiving their records must be considered, and support and information provided, so clients can make an informed decision. It is important that clients are not denied their right to receive information about themselves, but that this be balanced with ensuring the client's wellbeing is safeguarded.

Clients are to be offered a supported release of their records. A casework assessment assists in determining the level of support and assistance offered to a client when they receive records about their time in 'care'.

This might involve assisting the client to plan their supports (having a partner, friend or family member with them) when they receive the records and how they will approach reading the records. It might involve establishing an arrangement with the client that they open records only when they next visit their therapist or it might involve a series of face-to-face meetings with the client to gradually read through the records according to the client's needs and wishes.

3.8 Family searching and reconnecting

Family searching and reconnecting may also, at times, require assistance from other Find and Connect Support Services, and service providers are encouraged to do so, if required. Support may also be provided to the family of the Care Leaver who is being searched for or is found, on a needs basis. Find and Connect Support Services' funding, including brokerage funding cannot be used to directly fund family reunions or visits (travel or accommodation costs).

Support services must advise clients that family searching may have a range of risks, limitations and consequences that need to be carefully considered, including that family members 'found' may not consent to being contacted. This information must be sensitively communicated and supported.

Useful tools, websites and documents in providing Find and Connect Support Services are available at [Section 8](#).

4 Governance and Support

Service providers must adhere to the governance and support requirements for staff and clients detailed below. This includes:

- Providing professional supervision and staff development opportunities, including enabling staff participation at Find and Connect Practice Roundtables
- Enhancing the organisation's existing documented policies and procedures to incorporate Find and Connect services.

4.1 Client group governance representation

Service providers are required to engage Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants in their organisations' governance arrangements and ensure their membership reflects the proportion of each group in the overall population.

This might include establishing a Consumer Reference Group and a mechanism to feed into the service action items and recommendations from the group about the service.

4.2 Practice Roundtable

The purpose of the Practice Roundtable is to build high quality practice, knowledge and networks to support Find and Connect practitioners.

Practice Roundtables occur annually and provide an opportunity for practitioners to meet, share and learn. Service providers are required to enable between one and three frontline staff members to attend, although the department may limit the number of attendees. Representative organisations, web resource and support service providers may use grant funding for staff transport and accommodation costs, and must confirm final attendee numbers with the department well in advance of the meeting date.

The Practice Roundtables are facilitated by a suitably qualified independent practitioner, such as a psychologist, social worker or therapist, with a demonstrated understanding of complex trauma and the specific needs of Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants.

4.3 Style guide

Service providers must adhere to the Find and Connect style guide, '*External Find & Connect Identity Guidelines*'. The style guide helps service providers to implement and maintain the Find and Connect identity for Find and Connect communications.

All products and materials which include the Find and Connect logo or which acknowledge the department, must be cleared by the Communication Services Branch. Products include (but are not restricted to) printed publications, digital resources, fact sheets, videos, signage and plaques. Provider websites should include the Find and Connect logo. Design mock-ups are to be provided for approval to findandconnect@dss.gov.au.

An acknowledgment text should be included on the communication product, which reads:

'Funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services' (If the product is fully funded by the department)

OR

'Supported by the Australian Government Department of Social Services' (If the product is partially funded by the department)

The acknowledgment text is **not** to be used in conjunction with the logo and should be placed separately from the logo. For example, the Find and Connect logo should appear at the top of the page and the textual acknowledgment placed at the bottom of the page.

1800 phone number format - Given the significance of the Find and Connect 1800 number representing the date of the National Apology, service providers are to ensure that all publications and media releases reflect the 1800 XX XX XX format (1800 16 11 09) rather than the 1800 XXX XXX where the significance of the number is likely to be lost.

5 Reporting

5.1 Data reporting

Service providers must meet their data collection and reporting obligations and work in accordance with the requirements described in Sections 2.9 and 2.10 of the [Families and Communities Program: Families and Children Guidelines Overview](#). Further information on the DSS Data Exchange, including the Protocols, Program Specific Guidance and [training resources](#), is available on the DSS Data Exchange web portal at <https://dex.dss.gov.au/>.

5.2 Hot issues and media

Increased public, media or political interest/scrutiny will periodically spike due to hot issues, including:

- something that is of interest to the target group, such as redress
- annual events such as the anniversary of the National Apology, Mother's Day, Father's Day and Christmas
- launches of new initiatives
- parliamentary proceedings, including Senate Inquiry or Estimates hearings and question time.

Identifying these hot issues and sharing information with the department will enable more proactive service delivery responses.

Service providers must also alert the department to any less urgent issues, particularly where they affect services to clients.

The department must be informed if service providers are planning to engage with the media. It is important that the department is made aware in advance of what issues will be raised as this will allow the department time to prepare for any follow-up enquiries and/or to brief relevant stakeholders as necessary.

5.3 Critical incidents and service delivery issues

Aside from the standard reporting, Find and Connect service providers must report critical incidents to the department. The department is also interested in hearing about any issues relating to the delivery of Find and Connect Support Services and maintains an Issues Register to track, collate, consider and assist to resolve, where possible, service issues. This provides a system to understand where there are similar issues across the jurisdictions.

6 Complaints

Service providers must have an 'internal complaints procedure' in place and it must be prominently displayed. The 'internal complaints procedure' can include that the complaint is initially handled by the organisation running the service, but can be escalated also if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the first response. Complaints are to be treated professionally and responded to in a timely manner.

Section 6 of the [Families and Communities Program: Families and Children Guidelines Overview](#) further outlines the process for dealing with complaints and escalation, including to the department.

The Commonwealth Ombudsman can also investigate complaints about the actions and decisions of Australian Government agencies to see if they are wrong, unjust, unlawful, discriminatory or unfair.

7 Grant Administration

Funding Arrangement Managers are the first point of contact with the department. They provide assistance with queries relating to planning, data and reporting, or any new issues that arise under these Operational Guidelines.

8 Appendix – Searching Tools

Due to the need to always respect and safeguard people's privacy and confidentiality, searching tools require appropriate boundaries when being accessed for Find and Connect purposes. Below are details of search tools that support services may use to locate family members that clients were disconnected from as a result of being placed in out-of-home 'care' as children.

8.1 Find and Connect web resource

The Find and Connect web resource was developed for Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants and everyone with an interest in the history of out-of-home 'care' in Australia.

This site can be used to:

- [Read information](#) about and [view images](#) of children's homes
- [Get help to find records](#) about childhood in 'care' and
- Connect with [support groups and services](#) in each Australian state/territory.

Note: No personal records or private information are published on the [Find and Connect](#) web resource.

8.2 Ancestry.com

The department has negotiated free access to Ancestry.com on behalf of Find and Connect Support Service providers. Although finding records is not always possible, having access to the extensive Ancestry.com website will make this task easier at times for staff to help people through the search for their history and identity.

Clients may access this free service through their Find and Connect Support Services provider, however personal accounts are not available to clients free of charge.

Ancestry.com passwords are confidential and must not be shared, including between staff. Account logins are renewed each April and the department will liaise at this time with support services to ensure login details are up-to-date. All service provider enquiries regarding access to Ancestry.com can be directed to the department's National Office Find and Connect team at findandconnect@dss.gov.au.

8.3 Facebook

Facebook is another search tool that Find and Connect Support Services might utilise to verify the identity of a relative that they are seeking on behalf of a client. It is the responsibility of the service providers to take steps to ensure that they comply with their privacy obligations arising under the grant agreement. Service providers might need to seek legal advice where appropriate to clarify their privacy obligations.

Privacy considerations regarding family members who do not wish to be contacted or found should also be considered by service providers. This could involve, for example, providing family members who do not wish to be contacted with an opportunity to 'opt in' to involvement with the program. Furthermore it might be better if the initial contact with those family members, for example, is carried out by the contracted service provider through a letter or some other medium rather than through Facebook, due to the potential negative privacy implications associated with Facebook. These comments provided by the department do not constitute legal advice.

8.4 National Archives of Australia (NAA)

The National Archives of Australia (NAA) has been described as 'the memory of our nation – collecting and preserving Australian Government records that reflect our history and identity'.

The collection traces events and decisions that have shaped the nation and the lives of Australians. Visitors can explore the collection, online or in person, to learn more. Further information can be found on the [NAA website \(http://naa.gov.au/about-us/\)](http://naa.gov.au/about-us/).

8.5 Trove

Trove is a free search service for all Australians to use in tracing family history, undertaking professional research, reading for pleasure, teaching or studying. It is hosted by the National Library of Australia to access online resources: books, images, historic newspapers, maps, music and archives. Further information can be found on the [Trove website \(http://trove.nla.gov.au\)](http://trove.nla.gov.au).

8.6 Registries of Births, Deaths and Marriages (BDM)

Each state/territory has its own office for registering births, deaths and marriages. Find and Connect Support Services assist their clients to confirm their identity, which often involves interactions with the Registries of Births, Deaths and Marriages (BDM). Support services also utilise BDM to find out information about clients' family members, who they were separated from because of their out-of-home 'care' experiences.

Support services are encouraged to collaborate on records searching, especially in interstate searches. The local service provider are a possible first point of contact as they have localised knowledge on records information for their jurisdiction.

The details on the BDMs in each jurisdiction are:

- Australian Capital Territory: www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au
- New South Wales: www.bdm.nsw.gov.au
- Northern Territory: <https://nt.gov.au/law/bdm>
- Queensland: www.qld.gov.au/law/births-deaths-marriages-and-divorces
- South Australia: www.cbs.sa.gov.au/births-deaths-marriages
- Tasmania: www.justice.tas.gov.au/bdm
- Victoria: www.bdm.vic.gov.au
- Western Australia: www.bdm.dotag.wa.gov.au

8.7 Electoral rolls

As reported in section 4.64 of the [April 2015 report by the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters](#), following advice received by the Commonwealth Ombudsman, the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) reversed their strict public roll access policy in March 2015 to allow members of the public unfettered access to the electoral roll.

This change means that it may be possible for Find and Connect Support Services to use the electoral roll to verify the full name and address of a person being searched for, for the purpose of family tracing and re-establishing relationships for Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants, and people affected by past forced adoption practices.

The report by the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters can be accessed at https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Electoral_Matters/2013_General_Election/Final_Report.

However, support services should check individual State and Territory Electoral Commission websites regarding the approved purpose for inspection of publicly-available state and territory electoral rolls as approved purposes vary across jurisdictions. For example, the NSW Electoral Commission currently prohibits roll inspections by people seeking to reconnect with an old acquaintance or a family member.

9 Glossary

'Care' – the term 'care' when in quotation marks refers to a time in a person's life when they were placed out-of-home and the 'care' provided was abusive or neglectful. Those who may identify as Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants experienced the Australian institutional 'care' system, which was the standard form of out-of-home 'care' in Australia in the last century. At least 500,000 children grew up, or spent long periods, in this environment.

Care Leavers – for the purposes of this document, the term Care Leavers is used collectively to refer to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants.

Clients – Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants (or those who request a service from Find and Connect and are assisted with a warm referral to receive a more appropriate service or support through an 'Out of Scope client' response).

Contemporary care leavers – refers to people leaving out-of-home care after 1989. It is important that the experience of contemporary care leavers is not assumed to be abusive as it was found to be for Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants.

DSS – The Australian Government Department of Social Services.

DSS Data Exchange - The Data Exchange is a free web based portal which was implemented in 2014 across all in-scope DSS programs to allow the capture and reporting of data. Further information is available on the DSS Data Exchange website at <https://dex.dss.gov.au/>.

Families and Children Activity - is delivered under the Families and Communities Program and aims to support families, strengthen relationships, improve the wellbeing of children and young people and increase participation of people in community life to enhance family and community functioning.

Families and Communities Program – provides a range of services, focused on strengthening relationships, and building parenting and financial management skills, providing support for better community connections, as well as services to help newly arrived migrants in their transition to life in Australia.

Family Migration Schemes – Government-assisted relocation of families to Australia in the 1960s.

Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants - The target group for Find and Connect programs and projects are Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants, defined as:

- Forgotten Australians - people who as children were placed in children's homes, orphanages and other forms of out-of-home 'care' before the end of 1989, by which time the process of de-institutionalisation had concluded (they are not contemporary care leavers) and
- Former Child Migrants - children who arrived in Australia through historical child migration schemes until 1970 and who were subsequently placed in homes and orphanages.

Note: The term Forgotten Australians is re-traumatising for some people. This is important to acknowledge due to the regular use of this term throughout this document. Some Forgotten Australians prefer to be known as former state wards, 'Care Leavers', 'Clannies', 'Homies' or 'Wardies'.

NGO – Non-Government Organisation.

'Out of Scope' clients – clients who fall outside of the target group for Find and Connect Support Services.

Service provider – any service provider receiving funding under the Find and Connect Support Services component of the Adult Specialist Support Sub-Activity under the Families and Children Activity.

Supportive / warm referral – a 'live' three-way conversation in the presence of the client (whether face to face or by telephone) in which the referring organisation introduces the client, and explains what has already been done to assist the client and why the client is being referred.

Support service – a Find and Connect Support Service, which is funded to provide specialist counselling, referral services, peer and social support programmes and assistance to locate and access records and reconnect with family members (where possible) for Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants.

10 Version Control

| Version | Changes | Date |
|---------|---|------------------|
| 1.0 | Approved Operational Guidelines | 19 May 2014 |
| 1.1 | <p>Updated in consultation with the Find and Connect Support Services. Notable changes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Updated terminology and wording to ensure consistency and clarity - Consolidation of the Operational Guidelines and Operational Manual, specifically inclusion of sections 2.2 to 2.4 about eligible activities, linkages and specialist requirements. - Preface. Updated to provide greater clarity and include additional achievements. - Section 1.1. Added information on the Find and Connect Support Services component. - Section 1.3.3. Expanded the description of service skills required of practitioners - Section 1.4 – Promotion of Services. Removed requirement to promote on Family Relationships Online. Added requirement for promotion of services through service provider and department websites. - Section 1.5 – Safety. Addition of timeline for reporting critical incidents and greater clarity on what constitutes a critical incident. - Section 2.1.1 – Find and Connect Support Services. Updated to reflect current grant agreements. Clarification of brokerage provisions and principles. Added allowance for limited use of answering machines for team planning days and whole-of-service meetings. - Section 2.1.2 – Find and Connect web resource. Added information on the function of the resource. - Section 2.4 - Specialist requirements. Updated to reflect Families and Children Guidelines Overview. - Section 3.1. Incorporates former Sections 3.7-3.11. - Section 3.2. Incorporates former Sections 3.5-3.6. Clarified expectations around advertising brokerage. - Section 3.1.6 – Verification of time in care updated reasonable grounds for eligibility. - Section 4.2 – Consultative Forum. .Removed - Section 4.3 – Practice Roundtable. Updated arrangements, moved from 4.4. Removal of former Section 4.3 – Service Managers Meetings - Section 4.3 – Style Guide. Moved from Section 9. Included reference to the style guide. - Removal of former Section 5.1.1 ‘Out-of-Scope’ clients – Removed to avoid potential conflicting advice with the DSS Data Exchange Protocols. - Section 8 – Glossary. Updated to reflect terms used. Moved Glossary to end of document to Section 9. - Removal of Section 9 – GovDex - Amended table of contents numbering to reflect changes in document. - Section 8.7 – Electoral rolls. Updated to note some relaxation of Electoral Roll search limitations. | 30 November 2020 |