

Access to records for people who were in out-of-home care: moving beyond ‘third dimension’ archival practice

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The Records Continuum model, particularly its notion of the pluralised, ‘fourth dimension’ where records can have multiple meanings and multiple stakeholders, provides a useful framework for examining ‘care’ records and the roles they can play in the emerging processes of remembering and forgetting, providing services and restoring justice to Forgotten Australians and to all those affected by the history of institutional ‘care’.¹ Despite considerable advances in recent years in understanding the interplay between archives and issues facing ‘care’ leavers, the management of ‘care’ records remains largely stuck in ‘third dimension’ practices and ideologies. Creation, capture, organisation and access to records relating to the provision of ‘care’ involve interactions between ‘care’ leavers, social workers, archivists, historians and counsellors and these exchanges significantly shape and reshape the meaning(s) that can be made from these records. This article calls for a reorientation of perspective to recognise the many stakeholders associated with ‘care’ records, to aid the development and dissemination of new contextual documentation to improve access to records, and to help foster trust, dialogue, and reconciliation.

Keywords: archives; Forgotten Australians; Stolen Generations; access; Records Continuum

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Introduction

Page after page ... that [file] there reminded me that I was once upon a time society's reject ... it reminded me of all the loneliness, of all the horror and shame that I carried with me my whole life.²

That is how Vlad Selakovic described his experience of accessing his state ward file held by the Victorian Department of Human Services (DHS), the extant records of five years of his childhood spent in institutions in the first half of the 1970s.³ Vlad is in his 50s. He is a 'Forgotten Australian' and an active member of the support group Care Leavers of Australia Network (CLAN). Vlad's involvement with CLAN led him in 2008 to apply for access to his ward file (under the terms of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*), and learn more about a painful period of his past.

Vlad became involved with the 'Who Am I?' project in April 2010, when he made a presentation to a group of archivists, social workers, historians and policy makers attending an archives workshop. Every 'Who Am I?' workshop starts with a 'consumer perspective' like Vlad's. This practice reflects their importance as stakeholders and research participants in this action research project. Vlad's opening session, standing at the front of the conference room at the Victorian Archives Centre with his bundle of records in his hand, set the tone for the day's workshop. Vlad's reflections on applying for and receiving access to his ward file, his interpretation of the version of his past in the records, his reflections on the emotional impact of that experience and how his records played a role in the continuing process of coming to terms with the past was an exposition of the many complexities of records in the pluralised 'fourth dimension' of the records continuum. It was a powerful reminder of the influence and impact archives can have on people.

One of the striking things about Vlad's presentation was an apparent paradox: the juxtaposition of Vlad's courage and eloquence, on the one hand, and his apparent inability to break out of the fragmented, judgemental and dismissive representations of himself in his ward file. Vlad described himself as a 'bad person' several times during his presentation.⁴ But at another level he was also able to see that this 'bad boy' in the file was just a *representation* of him by a system that had failed him:

... it's staggering to find out that the welfare department, in that day and age and era, was allowed to get away with certain things the way they did. There are comments in those pages that are derogatory to a little boy, you're talking about a boy who was 10 years old, 12 years old, and they're literally saying that this boy was no good. Would always grow up to be no good ... well, I'm sorry, that was part of a system that let me down.⁵

Although Vlad recognised that his file was an artefact from a highly flawed system, he still talked about his file as his 'whole childhood, wrapped up in a little envelope'. It was clear that the process of accessing his records had triggered old feelings of shame for Vlad, and had collapsed some of the distinctions between the present and a traumatic past.

Vlad's disturbing experience of accessing his file is echoed in the testimonies of other Forgotten Australians, former child migrants and members of the Stolen Generations. The same distress, confusion and feelings of violation are expressed by those who access the 'hostile, unauthorised biographies' created by state authorities in various countries.⁶

Vlad described his file as a 'demon':

And I'd sit there and go page by page through certain things, and all of a sudden, you'll pick up a page and, it just hits you. And you could be lost for hours. I truly mean that this one page could take you away to another world, for hours. And all of a sudden you'll come to, and you'll go, 'Well, I think I'd better get rid of that page', and then you go on to the next one. And the next one's – nothing, because it might be, 30 per cent blanked out, 90 per cent of it's blanked out, so ... all there is is a couple of sentences, something like, where you were, what you had for dinner.⁷

Vlad, speaking at the workshop in 2010, still had many unresolved questions about his past – his ward file was terribly important to him, but it was hardly a magical key to his identity, or the answer to all of his questions.

After the workshop, members of the 'Who Am I?' team talked some more with Vlad about his presentation and his experiences accessing his records. In this discussion, Vlad expressed a keenness to hand over his records to the research team (you might even say that Vlad couldn't wait to see the back of them ...) ⁸ to see what sense we could make of them, and study the processes by which they were made available to him. ⁹ Looking at the documents which DHS released to Vlad, we were struck by the gap between how records custodians saw their processes of providing former residents with supported access to their records, and the way they are perceived by those outside of the organisation. The records continuum model offers insights into this gap between Vlad's understanding of his file, and DHS's conception of its access procedures.

Vlad's file demonstrated how the meanings and interpretations of 'care' records are largely produced, not so much by the actual contents of the records, as by the interventions of the archivist or custodian. In the words of Barbara Reed, records are defined as much by the processes applied to their management as by the physical objects themselves. ¹⁰ Taking a closer look at the file, as an artefact, we wondered whether some of the significant distress and confusion experienced by Vlad could have been alleviated by changes to DHS's administrative and archival procedures. Vlad's story demonstrated how an organisation's 'routine' practices and language can contribute to a negative experience of records access. The process needs to change to acknowledge that many Forgotten Australians mistrust authority figures, have low literacy levels, lack confidence and self-esteem, and will experience great apprehension when approaching a service provider. ¹¹

The way an organisation documents its 'care' records within its information management system also significantly shapes (or limits) the way these records are interpreted by Forgotten Australians. Our experiences working with Vlad convinced us of the need for organisations to document 'care' records in a way that acknowledges and accommodates these records' 'multiple archival purposes' in the pluralised fourth dimension of the continuum. ¹² The management of the extant records of the Victorian Government's exercise of the child welfare function is hampered by 'third dimension' practices, assumptions and systems. ¹³ This can help to explain the tensions and misunderstandings associated with the vexed issue of Forgotten Australians and access to 'their' records (apart from the very real issue of the huge volume of these records and the legacy of decades of poor recordkeeping and inadequate funding).

Forgotten Australians' records are embedded in a complex and contested social and cultural context, which has many parallels with international campaigns relating to the past treatment of children (such as in Canada, Scotland, and Sweden), as well as with efforts to improve access to archives in societies that have experienced genocide and other human rights violations. ¹⁴ In this context, records are not just internal documents, impartial evidence or the sole property of the custodians. In the fourth dimension records can bear witness to wrongs and abuses and feed into processes of personal and

collective remembering and forgetting; and, in holding great value for a range of stakeholders, these records can also generate quite different meanings and interpretations. However, despite significant activity in recent years, including policy initiatives for Forgotten Australians like government inquiries and formal apologies from state and national governments, indexing and digitisation projects, record-holding organisations in Australia are yet to make the shift to ‘pluralised recordkeeping’ practices.¹⁵

A closer look at Vlad’s ‘file’

Looking at Vlad’s ‘file’ and the processes behind its construction and release reveal that everyday administrative practices can take on enormous significance and cause distress and confusion in the case of ‘care’ records.¹⁶ ‘It’s not very inviting ... to see your whole childhood wrapped up in a little envelope.’¹⁷ Vlad expressed that he felt hurt to receive his records in a standard-issue Postpak, as well as by the physical presentation of the documents themselves – in a grey plastic folder, containing pages of copies of documents secured by a bull-dog clip.

On top of the grey folder containing the records was a cover letter from the Department of Human Services. This letter used formal language and jargon to explain what Vlad would find in his ‘file’. The section of the letter referring to the fact that DHS staff had made a decision to ‘exempt’ some information from Vlad’s records under the Freedom of Information Act 1982, was in impersonal language, and used the passive voice:

Some information relating to your sisters ... has also been exempted from your records. This includes two pages of L’s records that had been included in your file (pages 63 & 64) which have been exempted in full. As this information related to your siblings and was of a personal nature, it was not considered reasonable to release to you.¹⁸

A study in the United Kingdom identified the ‘routine redaction of information due to third party requirements under the legislation’ as one of the most critical and emotive issues for ‘care’ leavers.¹⁹ Similarly, consultations in Australia have uncovered a widespread belief that the exemption of information about ‘third parties’ (family and friends) from personal records is fundamentally unjust. A study from 2010 reported:

It is strongly felt that information about family members, in particular, is inextricably linked to one’s own sense of personhood and identity and therefore is by definition personal information about the care leaver.²⁰

Given the level of feeling and debate about the issue of ‘third party privacy’, the departmental cover letter’s use of indirect and passive language to refer to the decision about Vlad’s sisters’ information was not appropriate.

The cover letter also included a table summarising where information had been exempted, as well as revealing that Vlad’s ‘file’ actually comprised records taken from three separate series: Ward Index Cards, Turana²¹ Client Cards, and Youth Welfare Files. Documents from each of these series were presented separately in Vlad’s grey folder, with blue cover sheets. For example, the blue sheet for the Ward Index Cards included the text: ‘DOCUMENTS RELEASED UNDER FREEDOM OF INFORMATION. Ref W002149. Ward Index Cards. Vladimir Selakovic’. Vlad reflected that the contents and the structure of the file required more explanation, including who created

the records, why they were created and how they were organised. ‘That would have prepared me for what follows – “this is what I’ve got to look forward to” – I knew there were records created but had no idea there were such things as “ward index cards”.’ Vlad was confused by a reference number W002149 that appeared on the sheets and in various places throughout his records. Vlad knew that this number was not his ward number (as he still remembers this number). He wondered if the W stood for ward, and what the significance of the number was.

This example demonstrates how seemingly neutral administrative practices on the part of the records’ custodians can lead to misunderstanding and confusion when records travel from ‘inside’ to ‘out there’ (or from one dimension of the continuum to another). Given the history of institutionalised children, there is a need to be very careful to provide transparent explanations about administrative actions and decisions to avoid any unnecessary distress or confusion. Many submissions to the Forgotten Australians inquiry referred to the suppression of identity that was common practice in institutions, with children known only by their ward number (indeed, many ‘care’ leavers signed off their submission to the Australian Senate with their ‘identity number’ and Vlad introduced himself to the workshop with his name and ward number).²²

Vlad spoke about the first time he read through his records, and how shocked he was at the contents behind the blue sheet. Vlad was unprepared for the fact that the ‘file’ was *about* him but not *for* him. The records in his ‘file’ had been created by social workers, police, superintendents and the courts for their own administrative purposes, and without any thoughts to a future where Vlad might come back and read it. Due to the structure of the forms, reporting requirements and social mores of the day, there is a lot of repetition, confronting language and judgements.

The research project we have undertaken with Vlad clearly highlights that changes in practices in terms of releasing government records have the potential for improved services being provided to Forgotten Australians. Furthermore, we found that improving access will involve changes in the way that records are described and documented by record-holding organisations. Organisations need to capture the ‘story of the records’ so that users can encounter the stories ‘in the records’.

Context – the awful truth

The story of the Forgotten Australians’ records can help to shed light on the shameful history of the neglect and dehumanisation of children in Australian institutions. We can learn about the child welfare system through the documents the system generated and the language used by records’ creators: Vlad’s movement from institution to institution was recorded by ‘admission receipts’; the reports from when Vlad lived in Baltara Reception Centre involved the school principal using a pro forma ‘Notes on personality and behaviour (underline any that apply)’ to select adjectives that best described the child. The use of ward numbers rather than names, the miniscule amount of information recorded about a child living in a Home for years and years – all these features of the records speak volumes about how the system saw the children in its ‘care’. The records are artefacts of the child welfare system’s particular ‘regime of truth’,²³ which determines what is recorded, what is absent, what is deemed important and what is ignored.

Terry Cook writes that ‘behind the record always lies the need to record’.²⁴ One of the awful truths that is part of the contextual story of the records of Forgotten Australians is that staff in Homes and workers in DHS did not record information

about children – their needs, their problems, their individual personalities, achievements, aspirations, their identities – because it was not required. The extant records did not come into being out of a desire to record information to help understand the child and her or his family situation, or to provide a record of milestones and important events in a child’s life. In fact, the documentary traces mostly relate to administrative incidents that were bureaucratically important to the institution – records of admissions and discharges, maintenance payments paid (or not) by a child’s parents, correspondence between a Home and the department about who pays for the child’s school uniform, and so on. One submission to the Forgotten Australians inquiry describes the past practices in the Victorian child welfare system and the documentary traces they created:

For good or bad, the child went forth into the unknown, a receipt for his person secured, and a brief history of the child sent to the Superintendent of the institution. This history was no more than a précis of the Police complaint, a statement of the court decision, and an itemised account of the disposal of the other children in the family. There the child would remain, and for practical purposes the file was closed, until it became necessary to remove him from the institution. For the time being, the Department had fulfilled its legislative functions, and no further action ensued until it was necessary to make a new decision about his disposal.²⁵

There was no business need to create individual case files. There was no compliance need to create such files. And absolutely no thought was given to the possibility that these children would be returning to the organisation years later as adults, and asking to see records which they were sure must be in existence. As Wickman writes, ‘... unfortunately what was momentous to the Stolen Children may have been incidental to the government’.²⁶ Nor could the records creators have foreseen the devastating effects of their lack of recording.

Capturing the context

‘Care’ records in Victoria are dispersed across a range of collections, in the custody of government agencies, heritage and cultural institutions, churches, and community service organisations. The people responsible for managing these records, and making them available to former residents come from a variety of professional backgrounds, and often lack the time or ability to manage the complex emotional needs of the client. Regardless of the particular circumstances, all of the people involved in the process of releasing ‘care’ records significantly shape the records’ meaning, impact and interpretation by users outside of the custodial organisation.²⁷ Whether they are aware of it or not, they are playing a powerful intermediary role. The interactions and exchanges between users (and their agents) and records custodians are crucial. They can be seen as a knowledge creation activity,²⁸ just as much as the development of series descriptions, indexes and finding aids. During such exchanges, the records are contextualised and re-contextualised by the custodian and by the client.

Eric Ketelaar writes that ‘every interaction, intervention, interrogation and interpretation by creator, user and archivist shapes or reshapes the meaning of the record’.²⁹ The release of documents can be described as an ‘activation’ of the records. Different processes of release (a personal meeting to hand over records, sending a file in the mail, finding information on the web) create different meanings. Some record-holding agencies are acutely aware of the importance of this exchange and of the need to incorporate

personal contact into access procedures. For example, MacKillop Family Services strongly recommends to applicants that they attend the Heritage and Information Service (or another setting of their choice) to receive their records in person. This meeting also provides an opportunity for the former resident to view records, photographs and other cultural material that is rich in contextual information about the institution they lived in, or the time when they were in ‘care’.³⁰

Many of the individuals responsible for releasing records to ‘care’ leavers understand the vital importance of providing historical context together with the personal record, and appreciate the fact that the knowledge shared during the personal interaction is of immense value. But until recently, very little of this contextual information existed in recorded, or easily accessible, formats. This was one of the factors driving the development of the ‘Who Am I?’ project (2009–11) – it was clear that there was a wealth of historical knowledge and corporate memory, largely in the heads of staff members (each of which was a kind of living repository). The Pathways website developed by the ‘Who Am I?’ project team³¹ was born out of the urgent need to capture the existing knowledge in the sector in a systematic, standards-based way, and to make it widely accessible.

First published in December 2009, Pathways is increasingly playing a role in how records custodians release ‘care’ records, providing workers and their clients with some of the contextual and historical information needed to make sense of personal records. However, we see a need to further develop Pathways beyond being a source of historical contextual information about the people, institutions and organisations involved in the provision of ‘care’ in Victoria. There is a parallel need to capture the archival records in context, the complex and ever-changing administrative landscape in which these records are created and managed.³² The documentation needs to encompass the multiple perspectives and ‘truths’ of ‘care’ records and meet the needs of the records’ many stakeholders.³³ Indeed, given the poor recordkeeping practices in child welfare in the past (where often ‘several years of a life can be recorded by no more than some one-line entries in a register’),³⁴ the *context* may offer much more meaning than the *contents* of the records.

Our consultations as part of the ‘Who Am I?’ project have found that few custodians have the knowledge, systems or resources in place to document their collections to a standard that enables them to tell ‘the story of the records’. Recent archival projects (understandably, driven by the recommendations of reports like the one produced by the Forgotten Australians inquiry and increasing requests from former residents for access to information) have tended to focus on key series within a collection (such as indexing admission and discharge records), rather than understanding and documenting an organisation’s collection as a whole. The majority of Victorian record-holding organisations are yet to develop documentation – such as accession information, series descriptions, provenance data – that meets the standards of authenticity, useability and reliability.³⁵ It therefore follows that these records are not being managed in a way that enables them to function as ‘accessible collective memory’,³⁶ and people are missing out on information that potentially could be crucial to them being able to make sense of the past.

The ‘Who Am I?’ project team is working with our partner organisations to develop user-friendly, plain language documentation that can help ‘care’ leavers to make sense of their records. This documentation will be available via Pathways, and we also encourage record-holding organisations to publish information about their records holdings and their access policies on their websites.

Documenting ‘care’ records for a range of users

The fourth dimension of the records continuum is characterised by multiple stakeholders with interests and rights related to records, whatever their physical location or custodian. Records are important to multiple parties from the moment of creation (first dimension) onwards. Barbara Reed writes that ‘the fourth dimension involves ensuring that records are able to be reviewed, accessed and analysed for a range of external accountability, historical and cross organisational purposes’.³⁷ In Australia, practices around the management of ‘care’ records remain constrained by third dimension understandings of ownership and privacy, and positivist conceptions of archives as impartial evidence.³⁸

For example, notions of exclusive ownership of records persist on the part of records’ custodians and Forgotten Australians, sometimes leading to conflict and mistrust. For many people who were in ‘care’ as children, like Vlad, the records in the custody of ‘care’ providers are a part of their lives. Some people see the records as rightfully theirs, and object to the records being managed by the ‘care’ provider. In the words of a witness to the Bringing them Home inquiry:

Why have they got records on us? I’m not a criminal. I never have been a criminal and I object to the government holding records on me. I didn’t do anything wrong and I want those records to be – if they don’t want to hand them over to me, then destroy them in front of me. I don’t see why I should have that humiliation.³⁹

Despite the efforts of a number of state governments,⁴⁰ there is still a real shortage of publicly accessible information about what records relating to Forgotten Australians (whether open or closed to the public) are in the custody of government archives. This is in large part a consequence of the legacy of poor archival management of ‘care’ records and insufficient funding for records management within state government agencies. It also evidences a ‘third dimension’ attitude to documentation of records, one that does not meet the needs of any stakeholders beyond the records’ custodians. The lack of transparent documentation can lead to further erosion of trust and suspicions that the custodians are ‘hiding something’. Childhood experiences of being lied to, betrayed and abused by ‘care’ providers sometimes result in profound distrust of the custodian organisation, and suspicions on the part of ‘care’ leavers that *their* records are being hidden or destroyed to protect the reputations of the organisation. One submission to Forgotten Australians alleged: ‘The Department has numerous files, reports and information but choose to release only minor non damning propaganda’.⁴¹

It is clear that many ‘care’ leavers feel excluded from what Jeanette Bastian has described as the ‘community of records’.⁴² For some ‘care’ leavers, this sense of marginalisation is one of the drivers of their own collecting and archiving activities, which have seen the establishment of community archives, museums, as well as online communities where information, images and stories are shared.⁴³ The concept of the community of records, and its notions of joint heritage and shared ownership, has the potential to provide ‘archival solutions to the dilemmas of locating all voices within the spaces of records’. For Eric Ketelaar, the idea of the community of records places equal value on the role of creators, custodians, and other stakeholders or parties who have an interest in the records.⁴⁴

Another factor hampering the uptake of a ‘bigger picture’, fourth dimension approach to managing ‘care’ records is what Jackie Bettington has described as a culture of ‘presentism’.⁴⁵ This is certainly the case when it comes to the Victorian organi-

sations – big and small, government and non-government – with ‘care’ records in their custody. The custodians of ‘care’ records in Victoria continue largely to understand their role and responsibilities in a way that sees recordkeeping and archives as an internal matter, more to do with compliance, evidence and internal governance than with notions of memory (individual, collective, institutional and cultural) and the cultural dimensions of recordkeeping (in many ways mirroring the records creators’ understanding of records and recordkeeping). The records continuum provides a model to help stakeholders manage ‘care’ records in a way that better meets the multiple external accountabilities of the fourth dimension.

Captives of the archives

The fact that many ‘care’ leavers talk about ‘my file’ or ‘my records’, suggests an archival landscape of order and control, an image that is far simpler and more coherent than the actuality. Forgotten Australians’ records rarely take the form of an individual case file, containing key personal documents (birth certificates, immunisation records), information about important events in the child’s life (birthdays, celebrations, prizes, illnesses, hospitalisations), photographs and mementoes. Rather, the traces of these children’s experiences in ‘care’ are fragmented, dispersed across a range of different record series and in the custody of different organisations, if the records managed to survive at all. In some ways, the disorder of the records mirrors the situations of the families that these children came from, families struggling to cope with hardship resulting from poverty, unemployment, family violence, bereavement, alcohol or mental illness.

The child’s parents and other family members are also ‘stakeholders’ in the community of records, and they too leave traces in the files. In Forgotten Australians the Senate Community Affairs References Committee reported on the practice of letters from parents to children in ‘care’ regularly being censored, or not passed on at all, but being filed with the child’s records:

... one 70 year old lady ... accessed her DOCS file only to discover that ‘inside were letters, letters that her Father had written to her and which she never received, letters also from her siblings which she never received and letters that she had written to her Father that hadn’t been posted. Ivy has always wondered why her Father didn’t reply to her letters’.⁴⁶

What sort of context can make sense of these ‘dead letters’ in the records of ‘care’ leavers? Without an explicit acknowledgement of the context of ‘care’ records, it can seem as if the records are ‘trapped’ within the system that created them, and all the thinking, assumptions and judgements that were a part of that system. Members of the community of records, ‘care’ leavers like Vlad, and past providers can also get ‘stuck’. Archival systems and documentation that privilege the records creators, or the custodians, not explicitly acknowledging the possible alternative (and valid) perspectives of other stakeholders, run the risk of tacit acceptance of values that underpinned the creation of these records.

Developing appropriate documentation can play a role in liberating ‘captives of the archives’.⁴⁷ Documentation can make a clear distinction between past and present, and make possible new formulations of identity, and new narratives about a painful past. If properly and sensitively described, the records do not have to be constrained by the context of their creation. The Records Continuum model provides an opportunity for new meanings to be created from ‘care’ records. With the help of appropriate documen-

tation and supported methods of release, ‘care’ leavers can use records to define their identity as much more than the throwaway derogatory remarks on a case file. The Continuum model also offers the possibility for past providers of ‘care’ to move on from the injustices of the past. Through their archival practices, ‘care’ providers can demonstrate that they have learned and moved on from past practices and that they are prepared to work with the community to make amends. If a record-holding organisation can manage its files in a way that acknowledges that records are the products of a system with its own logic and ideology, it is making a clear statement about the values and judgements of the organisation releasing the records today.

The history of ‘care’ used to be dominated by administrative and uncritical narratives of particular organisations or institutions, only to be challenged by new perspectives informed by the social history movement, not to mention the memoirs and testimonies now being produced by the protagonists themselves. This shift away from grand narratives and the stories of the winners is also taking place in the archival landscape.

Conclusion

We all shape our experience of the world through the construction of narratives.⁴⁸ But ‘few of us depend upon official records ... on the often fragmented and formal records of others ... for our identity or history’.⁴⁹ Vlad’s story, and the testimonies of ‘care’ leavers collected in the three Australian inquiries, demonstrate just how critical the information in ‘care’ records can be. The archival records of ‘care’ can play a crucial role in processes of constructing and reconstructing identities, of ‘composing’ life stories that help us to reach a state of ‘composure’, that is, having a story about the past that we can live with.⁵⁰ Without meaningful, sensitive and appropriate documentation of archival records, Forgotten Australians are more likely to encounter on their file an alien perspective of their own past. Rather than helping people to reclaim and rewrite their life histories, this can result in distress and re-traumatisation.

The implementation of appropriate archiving systems,⁵¹ documentation practices and access policies can enhance the potential of these records to contribute to healing and reconciliation. The provision of access needs to be recast, so that it is seen as an ‘exchange’ between joint stakeholders, a dynamic interaction that creates new meanings and narratives from the records over time. The model of the Records Continuum provides a possible way forward for all the members of this community of records, so that these records can be used to highlight past injustices and wrongs, and as the building blocks of new individual and collective stories.⁵²

Endnotes

This article contains excerpts from the presentation given by Vlad Selakovic in April 2010. Vlad has made an enormous contribution to the ‘Who Am I?’ project, and we thank him for his willingness to share his story and his desire to collaborate with project partners to improve services provided to Forgotten Australians.

1. The authors use the term ‘care’ in inverted commas in this article to indicate that many people have expressed the belief that this is not a word that describes their childhood experiences in an institution. We use the term ‘care’ to refer to the accommodation of children in orphanages, children’s homes and other institutions, as well as in family group homes, foster care or kinship care.

2. Vlad Selakovic, presentation at 'Archiving: Moving Forward as a Community' workshop, Victorian Archives Centre, 15 April 2010. A transcript of this presentation is available at <<http://www.findandconnect.gov.au/vic/objects/D00000421.htm>>, accessed 26 March 2012.
3. In the state of Victoria, the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* gives individuals the right to access government documents about one's 'personal affairs and the activities of government agencies', subject to exemptions.
4. See for example, this passage from the presentation: 'There's so much in here – my childhood, the beginning of my *life*, is all wrapped up in a few words in some pages here. A few pages. This is my childhood. There are things in here that have been written about me that are just not right, are all wrong. And there's not too much good written about me, I wasn't a good person, let's put it that way. I'd come through a system that was really bad, and I learned how to use that system to my advantage. Even as a small child. It was one of the things we all did – to survive, it was just that survival mode.' Selakovic, 'Archiving' presentation.
5. *ibid.*
6. See Alison Lewis, 'Reading and Writing the Stasi File: On the Uses and Abuses of the File As (Auto)Biography', *German Life and Letters*, vol. 56, no. 4, October 2003, pp. 377–97.
7. Selakovic, 'Archiving' presentation.
8. Vlad said of the file, 'I hated it, I despise it, I loathe it – and I *still* want *nothing* to do with it', *ibid.*
9. We received approval from the University of Melbourne's Human Research Ethics Committee to conduct this research with Vlad and his records. See "'Care" Leaver Access to Records: A Case Study', Ethics ID No 1034167.1.
10. Barbara Reed, 'Records', in Sue McKemmish, Michael Piggott, Barbara Reed and Frank Upward (eds), *Archives: Recordkeeping in Society*, Centre for Information Studies, Wagga Wagga, NSW, 2005, p. 106.
11. Frank Golding, 'Telling Stories: Accessing Personal Records', in Richard Hil and Elizabeth Branigan (eds), *Surviving Care: Achieving Justice and Healing for the Forgotten Australians*, Bond University Press, Robina, Qld, 2010, p. 89.
12. See Joanne Evans, Sue McKemmish and Karuna Bhoday, 'Create Once, Use Many Times: The Clever Use of Recordkeeping Metadata for Multiple Archival Purposes', *Archival Science*, no. 5, 2005, pp. 17–42.
13. See Brien Brothman, 'Making Up People: The State, Records and Bureaucracy in Jose Sarago's *All the Names*', *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 3 no. 2, November 2002, pp. 112–28.
14. See for example Anneli Sundqvist, 'Access and Accountability: Democratization of Information in Post-Conflict Societies', International Council on Archives, KLCC Kuala Lumpur, 2008, Session 022, available at <<http://www.ica.org/11114/articles-papers-reports-and-proceedings/access-and-accountability-democratization-of-information-in-postconflict-societies.html>>, accessed 11 February 2012.
15. The phrase is Barbara Reed's. See her article, 'Beyond Perceived Boundaries: Imagining the Potential of Pluralized Recordkeeping', *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 33, no. 1, May 2005, pp. 176–98.
16. This research project has led to further work with Vlad Selakovic, including a meeting between Vlad and the workers from the Department of Human Services (DHS) who were involved in the release of his records. The project continued throughout 2011, and is a contributing factor to significant changes in policy and practice at DHS. The effects of such policies on services provided to Forgotten Australians will be evaluated by DHS and the project team intends to publish an article about the research with Vlad.
17. Selakovic, 'Archiving' presentation.
18. Letter from DHS to Vlad Selakovic, 11 July 2008. Note that DHS did use the full names of Vlad's siblings in its letter, but we made the decision to not publish them in this article.
19. See the reports National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their Families (Australia), *Bringing them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families*, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Sydney, 1997, available at <http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/bth_report/index.html>, accessed 23 March 2012; Commonwealth of Australia, *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record*, 2001, available at <http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=clac_ctte/completed_inquiries/1999-02/child_migrat/report/index.htm>, accessed 23 March 2012; and Commonwealth of Australia, *Forgotten*

- Australians: A Report on Australians who Experienced Institutional or Out-of-home Care as Children*, 2004, available at <http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=clac_ctte/completed_inquiries/2004-07/inst_care/report/index.htm>, accessed 23 March 2012, as well as Jim Goddard, Julia Feast and Derek Kirton, 'Memories, Childhood and Professional Power: Accessing the Care Files of Former Children in "care"', in K Milnes, C Horrocks, N Kelly, B Roberts and D Robinson (eds), *Narrative, Memory and Knowledge: Representations, Aesthetics & Contexts*, University of Huddersfield, 2006. This chapter is available online at <http://www2.hud.ac.uk/hhs/nme/books/2007/Chapter_3_-_Jim_Goddard_Julia_Feast_and_Derek_Kirton.pdf>, accessed May 2011.
20. Find and Connect Scoping Study (November 2010), available at <http://www.facs.gov.au/sa/families/progserv/apology_forgotten_au/Pages/find_connect-scoping_study.aspx>. See also the account of Frank Golding, who appealed a decision to deny him access to the content of a letter on his file, written by his mother, 'Telling Stories', pp. 89–91.
 21. Turana was the Victorian reception centre for adolescent male wards.
 22. *Forgotten Australians* report, pp. 93–4.
 23. See Lewis's discussion of Michel Foucault's work in 'The Uses and Abuses', pp. 380–82.
 24. Terry Cook, 'Electronic Records, Paper Minds: The Revolution in Information Management and Archives in the Post-Custodial and Post-Modernist Era', *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 22, no. 2, November 1994, p. 302.
 25. *Forgotten Australians* submission no 47, Mr Neil McIntosh, Inquiry into children in institutional care, received by the Senate Community Affairs Committee 17 March 2005, available at <http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/clac_ctte/completed_inquiries/2004-07/inst_care/submissions/sublist.htm>, accessed 14 July 2011.
 26. Danielle Wickman, 'The Failure of Commonwealth Recordkeeping: The Stolen Generations in Corporate and Collective Memory', *Comma*, vol.1, 2003, p. 119.
 27. Elizabeth Yakel writes of how archival reference services need to be seen as more than 'information provision', but as a form of knowledge management. 'Thinking Inside and Outside the Boxes: Archival Reference Services at the Turn of the Century', *Archivaria*, vol. 49, pp. 140–60.
 28. Tom Nesmith, 'Re-Exploring the Continuum, Rediscovering Archives', *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 36, no. 2, November 2008, p. 39.
 29. Eric Ketelaar, 'Sharing: Collected Memories in Communities of Records', *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 33, no.1, May 2005, p. 50.
 30. See S Murray, J Malone and J Glare, 'Building a Life Story: Providing Records and Support to Former Residents of Children's Homes', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 61, no. 3, 2008, pp. 239–55. It should be noted that some former residents are not willing to accept the offered support from a past provider and state their preference to access and interpret their records on their own terms. Other former residents may not be able to make the journey to receive such support from the record-holding organisation.
 31. In November 2011, the Pathways website, developed by the 'Who Am I?' project, became known as 'Find and Connect Victoria', available at <<http://www.findandconnect.gov.au/vic/>>, accessed 2 December 2011.
 32. See Australian Society of Archivists Committee on Descriptive Standards, *Describing Archives in Context: A Guide to Australian Practice*.
 33. Chris Hurley has described the existence of alternative, and equally valid, perspectives on records as 'parallel provenance'. See McKemmish et al, *Archives: Recordkeeping in Society*, ch. 7.
 34. The quote is from *Forgotten Australians* report, p. 265.
 35. Reed, 'Records', p. 121.
 36. See Sue McKemmish, Barbara Reed and Michael Piggott, 'The Archives', in McKemmish et al, *Archives: Recordkeeping in Society*, p. 159.
 37. Barbara Reed writes, 'The fourth dimension ... represents the capacity for a record to exist beyond the boundaries of a single creating entity. This is the environment needed to ensure records are able to satisfy demands of those not involved with the actions precipitating records creation, capture and organisation. The fourth dimension involves ensuring that records are able to be reviewed, accessed and analysed beyond the organization, for the multiple external accountability, historical, cross organisational purposes that are required, for as long as they are required': 'Reading the Records Continuum: Interpretations and Explorations', *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 33, no. 1, May 2005, pp. 20–21.

38. Many writers have referred to a prevailing tendency in the archival profession, of ‘disrespecting or devaluing the cultural dimensions of recordkeeping’, to use the words of Reed. Reed quoted the words of McKemmish and Piggott, who in a presentation in 2002 issued a challenge to Australian archivists to develop practices that could ‘transcend the third dimension boundaries of individuals and institutions’. See Reed, ‘Beyond Perceived Boundaries’ p. 177.
39. Confidential evidence 284, South Australia, quoted in *Bringing them Home*.
40. A number of directories and finding aids to records relating to the ‘care’ of children were developed in the wake of the *Bringing them Home*, *Lost Innocents*, and *Forgotten Australians* inquiries, by state government departments, archival institutions and church organisations.
41. *Forgotten Australians* submission 242, Inquiry into children in institutional care, received by the Committee 17 March 2005, available at <http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/clac_ctte/completed_inquiries/2004-07/inst_care/submissions/sublist.htm>, accessed 14 July 2011.
42. See Jeannette Allis Bastian, *Owning Memory: How a Caribbean Community Lost its Archives and Found its History*, Contributions in Librarianship and Information Science number 99, Libraries Unlimited, Westport, CT, 2003.
43. See for example Andrew Flinn, Mary Stevens and Elizabeth Shepherd, ‘Whose Memories, Whose Archives? Independent Community Archives, Autonomy and the Mainstream’, *Archival Science*, vol. 9, nos 1–2, pp. 71–86. One notable example in Australia is the CLAN Orphanage Museum in Sydney, established by CLAN’s co-founder Leonie Sheedy. See <<http://www.clan.org.au/museum.php>>, accessed 24 May 2011.
44. See Ketelaar, ‘Sharing’, p. 52.
45. Jackie Bettington, ‘Standardised Recordkeeping: Reality or Illusion’, *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 32, no. 2, November 2004, pp. 46–69.
46. ‘Forgotten Australians’, p. 88.
47. This term is from a landmark article by Henrietta Fourmile in 1989 about Aboriginal history and cultural heritage: ‘Who Owns the Past? Aborigines as Captives of the Archives’, *Aboriginal History*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1989, pp. 16–27.
48. See for example Jerome Bruner, *Making Stories: Law, Literature, Life*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge and London, 2002, pp. 9–11.
49. Association of Directors of Social Services, ‘The Archiving and Destruction of Records for Children in Care/Looked After’, Briefing Paper, London, 2000, p. 1 quoted in Jim Goddard, Julia Feast and Derek Kirton, ‘A Childhood on Paper: Managing Access to Child Care Files by Post-Care Adults’, *Adoption & Fostering*, vol. 32, no. 2, Summer 2008, pp. 50–62.
50. See Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire, and the Imagining of Masculinities*, Routledge, London and New York, 1994. Dawson’s idea of ‘composure’ is further discussed in Suellen Murray et al, *After the Orphanage: Life Beyond the Children’s Home*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2009.
51. Reed makes the distinction between ‘archival systems’ and ‘archiving systems’, to distinguish between systems that take a third dimension approach, and those that deal with records from a ‘pluralised perspective’. See Reed, ‘Beyond Perceived Boundaries’, p. 181.
52. In terms of recordkeeping, reconciliation and redress, see for example Michael Piggott and Sue McKemmish, ‘Recordkeeping, Reconciliation and Political Reality’, presentation at the Australian Society of Archivists Annual Conference, Sydney, August 2002, available at <<http://www.infotech.monash.edu.au/research/groups/rcrg/publications/piggottmckemmish2002.pdf>>, accessed May 2011, and Emiko Hastings, ‘“No Longer a Silent Victim of History”: Re-Purposing the Documents of Japanese-American Internment’, *Archival Science*, vol. 11, nos 1–2, 2011, pp. 25–46.