

## REDRESS WA UPDATE

**JUNE 2009**

### **Support Groups:**

**Bringing together people with a shared experience**

**CBERS Redress Service** will be providing support groups for applicants during the interim period of the Redress scheme, with the assistance of *Connect Groups WA*.

In the coming months we will work closely with Connect Groups to develop a range of opportunities for Redress applicants. Connect Groups will manage all bookings and registrations of interest, while CBERS will coordinate the development and facilitation of the groups themselves.

Depending on the level of interest, opportunities may include: group discussions; information & learning sessions; issue-focussed groups; peer support and mentoring opportunities.

Most groups will run weekly for between six and 10 sessions, and will be based in Fremantle.

Groups are free for Redress WA applicants, however numbers are limited, so please get in early to secure a place in your preferred group.

Suggestions we have received so far include:

- *Building resilience, self esteem and survivor skills*
- *Peer mentoring opportunities*
- *Assertiveness training: Getting your message across effectively*
- *Literacy and numeracy as lifeskills*
- *Dealing with social isolation*
- *Understanding Anger*
- *Healing from childhood trauma*
- *Alcohol and drugs: Finding new alternatives*
- *Adult male survivors of sexual abuse: Early childhood issues*
- *Foster care leavers: Exploring the issues - is a contact register needed?*
- *Navigating the system: Centrelink, Homeswest, and other Government departments*
- *Making your will: Don't leave home without one*
- *Relaxation and meditation techniques*
- *Financial planning*
- *Everyday law and consumer rights: Credit cards, mobile phones, and more*

Are you interested in being a part of groups such as these? Or can you suggest other topics you'd like us to cover? If so, register your interest with Connect Groups (contact details below).

Far greater healing can occur among a group of people with shared experiences than in individual counselling sessions. Why not use this opportunity to connect with others and join in sharing this unique time in your life?

### **ConnectGroups**

**Postal Address**

PO Box 8140  
Perth Business Centre  
WA 6849

**Location**

Opposite Perth Oval  
335-337 Pier Street  
Perth WA

**Office Hours**

9am to 4pm, Mon - Thu

**Telephone:** (08)9228-4488

**Freecall:** 1800 195 575

**Fax:** (08)9228-4490

**Email:**

[jonine@connectgroups.org.au](mailto:jonine@connectgroups.org.au)

**Website:**

[www.connectgroups.org.au](http://www.connectgroups.org.au)

# *Healing starts on the inside*

*Dr Philippa White*

We are aware the Redress application process has been a painful experience for many people, and some have asked us *'is it worth it?'*

The short answer is *Yes*.

Regardless of any future outcomes provided through Redress WA, sharing experiences of childhood trauma and abuse is always a positive step towards resolving the problems that arise from trying to lock away traumatic memories.

A snowballing effect takes place when we try to block out feelings associated with childhood abuse, which build up to a point where the feelings can start coming out at inconvenient times. This might show up as flashes of anger or as overwhelming sadness out of all proportion to the incident that triggered it.

Clinical psychologist Christabel Chamarette describes a 'jar of emotions' that starts to fill up during childhood, and is added to each time an emotion can't be expressed. The very strong emotions linked to childhood abuse quickly fill the jar, and start to build up pressure. When there is no opportunity to express the emotions in a healthy way, the backlog starts to leak out in unexpected and inappropriate bursts. Talking about traumatic memories vents the pressure in the jar and allows us to feel less vulnerable and more in charge of our emotions.

Revisiting memories of childhood abuse through adult eyes also enables us to see ourselves with greater understanding and compassion. Children take on an excessive amount of responsibility for

what happens to them, and will often feel irrational guilt, while any positive experiences associated with the abuse can lead victims to believe they were complicit in it. Unpacking memories of childhood abuse provides an opportunity to see events in context, and to understand why we might not have said anything, or why we may have given the appearance of 'consent'.

Healing starts from the inside, and during this interim period of the Redress WA process it is important that applicants focus on self affirmation, and feel proud they have taken the step of sharing traumatic experiences of pain and loss. While external acknowledgement is important, belief in one's self is far more significant than being affirmed by any outside source.

Key questions during this time are *"What can I do for myself?"* and *"What benefits can I derive from having unpacked my old memories?"* So far we have seen applicants experience many unexpected gains, particularly those who have used the opportunity to share memories and written stories with loved ones, thereby bringing greater communication and understanding to their relationships.

We would like to know what this experience has been like for you. How have you coped with the application process? Have you gained positive outcomes you can share with others going through the same experience? If so, please write or phone us with your feedback, and let us know if you would like to share your experiences with others.

## **CONTACT DETAILS**

**CBERS Redress Service is located at:** **The Edmund Rice Institute**  
**24 High Street**  
**Fremantle WA 6160**

### **CONTACT PEOPLE:**

**Dr Philippa White**  
**Email: [pip.crs@iinet.net.au](mailto:pip.crs@iinet.net.au)**

**Dr Debbi Rosser**  
**Email: [deb.crs@iinet.net.au](mailto:deb.crs@iinet.net.au)**

**Freecall 1800 621 805**  
**Phone (08) 9433-3644**  
**Facsimile (08) 9382-4114**  
**Email [cbersredress@iinet.net.au](mailto:cbersredress@iinet.net.au)**  
**Website [www.cbbers.org](http://www.cbbers.org)**

## MAKING A WILL: Don't leave home without one

Making a will is the kind of thing people often put off to 'another day', and roughly half of us die without leaving a valid will. This is called dying 'intestate', and it means the law decides how your belongings are distributed and possibly what kind of funeral you have. The government may also decide who looks after your children if they are still minors.

Making a will is important at any stage of your life, and ensures that when you die, things are handled in the way you wanted.

If a person dies without a will, the Public Trustee must take control of their estate. Generally, anyone over the age of 18 who is entitled to a share of the estate can apply to the Supreme Court to administer and distribute the property, but without a will, it may be hard to work out who should apply for permission.

The issue of wills can be particularly sensitive for care leavers, and people who have experienced family separation sometimes face additional difficulties in regard to making a will. If schooling was limited or disrupted during childhood they are likely to feel less confident about completing the paperwork, and those who struggle financially might feel they have no reason to make a will.

Our experience has shown that regardless of whether there are financial assets, many problems can arise when people die without a will. Loved ones may be left without any way to carry out what they knew to be the person's wishes, or unable to obtain

the most basic information regarding funerals and other arrangements.

Aboriginal people face additional problems in regard to intestacy and wills. Under current WA law, if a person of Aboriginal descent dies without a valid will, the Public Trustee will take control of their estate under the *Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority Act 1972 (WA)*, and those entitled to a share of the estate are not allowed to apply for permission to administer and distribute it. However unjust these laws are, they are currently in place in our State, making it even more important for Aboriginal people to ensure that they have a valid will.

Making a will is not difficult, and do-it-yourself kits can be obtained from any Australia Post Office. The kits cost about \$30 and provide all the documents and information necessary to create a will.

If sufficient numbers of people register their interest, we plan to offer information and group discussion sessions on making wills, with practical assistance to create a will.

If you are interested in attending this type of group, please call Connect Groups on (08) 9228-4490 or freecall 1800-195-575, and register your interest.

### Did you know?

Marriage totally cancels (revokes) your existing will. If you haven't made a new will since you married (no matter how long ago), **you don't have a will.**

For your children's sake, you should appoint a legal guardian for them.  
**You can do this in your will.**

Alliance for  
Forgotten Australians

Forgotten Australians:  
Supporting survivors of  
childhood institutional  
care in Australia



A booklet published by the Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA) has been well received by the CBERS network, and can be particularly useful for people who experienced institutional care. This 16-page booklet provides a clear summary of issues often faced by survivors of institutional care – known as the *Forgotten Australians*. The free booklet can be obtained from Families Australia on (02) 6273-4885, or from CBERS Redress Service in Fremantle.

More information on the Alliance for Forgotten Australians is available on their website at [www.forgottenaustralians.org.au](http://www.forgottenaustralians.org.au). The AFA representative in WA is Laurie Humphreys (Ph: 9337-4850).

## A MESSAGE FROM REDRESS WA

### ***You've lodged a Redress application – what happens now?***

Approximately 10,000 names were registered with Redress WA before it closed on 30 April 2009. Completing an application took a lot of courage and all applicants should feel very proud that they have taken the major first step of the healing journey offered by Redress WA.

Redress WA is working as quickly as possible to process all of the applications however, with over 10,000 registrations there is a lot of information to go through.

The assessment of your application will take a long time as all of the information needs to be researched and checked to decide what level of payment may be offered.

**The first payment offers will start being posted to applicants at the end of the year or early in 2010.**

Please note that priority payment requests for personal reasons, including financial hardship, will not be considered.

We hope all payments will be finalised by the middle of 2011.

From July, all Redress WA applicants will be sent a newsletter every three months. We hope this will keep our applicants up to date on the Scheme and reduce the need to call Redress WA.

Your patience and understanding while the Redress WA team get to work on processing the applications is greatly appreciated.

### ***Have you moved house?***

If so, make sure you contact Redress WA on freecall **1800 617 233** to change your address details.

### ***Contact details for Redress WA***

Freecall: 1800 617 233  
9.00 – 5.00pm (WST) Monday to Friday  
Email: [info@redress.wa.gov.au](mailto:info@redress.wa.gov.au)  
Website: [www.redress.wa.gov.au](http://www.redress.wa.gov.au)

Support and self-help groups play an important role in our community by allowing people

with similar issues to come together. By coming together they can provide each other with mutual support and take the steps necessary to address their issues and make a positive change in their lives. Support groups become banks of knowledge and practical experience and, as such, help people make informed decisions, enabling them to feel they are more in control of their lives. Support groups range from large long-established groups like AA, to smaller groups of friends who meet over coffee to share their experiences, trials and successes.

*ConnectGroups–SupportGroupsAssociation* WA is the peak body for support groups across the State. We are a not-for-profit organisation that links members of the community to groups that deal with a wide range of life-affecting issues.



**ConnectGroups**  
helping support groups & individuals

This information is accessible free of charge via our Online Directory

at [www.connectgroups.org.au](http://www.connectgroups.org.au), by telephoning the office on 9228-4488, or by contacting us via e-mail on [info@connectgroups.org.au](mailto:info@connectgroups.org.au).

In addition to this referral service, one of our most important roles is providing hands-on assistance to new and existing support groups. We do this by offering one-on-one mentoring, training and the provision of resources (available on our website). We also run forums for support groups and related organisations, and help support groups running under the umbrella of an organisation to continue independently. All of these services are free of charge to our members.

Our website also contains an e-newsletter, and members, related organisations and interested members of the public are encouraged to read and contribute to it.