

**Media release
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CLAN'S AUSTRALIAN ORPHANAGE MUSEUM TO CALL GEELONG HOME



The nationally significant Australian Orphanage Museum will have a permanent home at Geelong.

The museum will feature an extensive collection of artefacts, memorabilia and photographs collected from orphanages around the country or donated by Care Leavers, organisations that ran homes and the public. It will be located at 351 Ryrie Street, Geelong.

Between them, State governments, churches and charities ran more than 900 orphanages, Children's Homes, training schools and missions accommodating hundreds of thousands of Australian children.

The Australian Orphanage Museum has been established in Geelong because the district has had 13 orphanages, the most outside any capital city in the country.

The museum project has been years in the making for CLAN (Care Leavers Australasian Network), which for 20 years has been a determined advocate for the recognition and rights of people abused – sexually, physically and emotionally – in orphanages, Children's Homes, missions and foster care.

CLAN chief executive officer Leonie Sheedy said the museum was deeply important for all Care Leavers and their families.

“It will trigger a lot of emotions but there's also a wonderful sense of belonging,” Ms Sheedy said. “Most importantly, it acknowledges Care Leavers' history, which is extremely important to all of us and should also be recognised by the whole Australian community.

“What happened to us – the sexual violence, institutionalised abuse, the emotional cruelty, the separation of our families, the child labour and the loneliness and isolation – must never be swept under the carpet again.

“We were just children and we had no-one to turn to.”

“Many Clannies have given large financial donations to the museum,” Ms Sheedy said. “That shows the value they place in the Orphanage Museum.

“CLAN would like to thank the Federal Government for \$2 million in funding toward the museum and everyone else who contributed. We look forward to opening the Australian Orphanage Museum at its new site in 2021.

“Here in Geelong, we've received important pro bono help from Kevin Roache and St Quentin's Brendan O'Loan, from MPs Richard Marles and John Eren, and from City of Greater Geelong council and staff. ”

Ms Sheedy said the orphanage would attract strong interest among Clannies, and the public, across the country.

“Even with COVID, 160 people visited the interim museum after we opened it in October 2019,” she said.

The museum welcomes any photographs or memorabilia people wish to donate. They should email CLAN at: support@clan.org.au

FURTHER COMMENT: Leonie Sheedy, CEO, CLAN, 0425 204 747, ceo@clan.org.au