

Welcome
on behalf of the Memorial Committee
Ms Fran Jenkins

The opening of this memorial today is a very special day in the long history of the Good Shepherd in Australia and one that has been a long time coming.

I would especially like to welcome all the Former Residents of GS homes.

We understand that it hasn't been easy for some of you to be here, but today's event would have little significance, without your presence.

We stand within the grounds of one of many Good Shepherd Homes, the Abbotsford Convent, which today is a bustling hub for community and cultural activities.

We as visitors can hardly imagine what it was like to live here or in any other GS homes. But you relive it and feel it, each time you come here. Your history permeates this whole site, the courtyards, the rooms and the walls.

For some of you that history is tinged with sadness; for some there has been anger and resentment. Some of you have forged strong and lasting relationships with each other, with the sisters and with Good Shepherd. Many of you I know have fond and often amusing memories of growing up in Good Shepherd.

Your lives here were a mixed blessing – good and bad, happy and sad. But more than anything your lives were cut off, separated from the world; they were not the lives that others lived outside of here.

The memorial project began four and a half years ago after the Good Shepherd 150th celebrations when former residents put forward the idea that they would like 'something' to acknowledge them at the Abbotsford site, apart from what the Convent foundation was planning.

It has been a long process with many hours of consultation between former residents, Good Shepherd staff and Sisters, staff from other organisations and the designers. Our conversations brought to the surface the many different emotions and feelings of the women, girls and boys who lived in these homes. At times these conversations were difficult and painful. At other times we shared light hearted moments.

We wanted to ensure that this memorial reflected the collective experience of the former residents.

Recently, I was looking at my notes from the first meeting and I'd like to share a few of those notes with you. 'Needs to be a reflective place outside the chapel,' 'pain is still there,' 'people have survived,' 'people are still angry,' 'people who were at Good Shepherd are bold'.

Another note said we 'want a memorial that people can interpret their own meaning from, rather than words'. Together we have tried to ensure it does that.

This memorial is for you, the former residents - to ensure that your time at GS homes will never be forgotten by future generations. We hope that it becomes a place of contemplation and sanctuary, maybe for yourselves, your families or for some person just feeling they need to sit and reflect for a while.

We can't change the past but we can understand it better and learn from it. Understanding our past can help us in planning and building a better future. Our past is captured in your lives and in your stories.

We acknowledge your courage, your strength and your resilience. We thank you for being here with us today.

We also acknowledge all those who can't be with us. Some chose not to come because the occasion might bring back feelings they would rather forget. Others live too far away. Some have passed on before this memorial was completed.

This memorial acknowledges your lives in Good Shepherd Homes and we honour each and every one of you.

Fran Jenkins

11 February 2018