

How do I access records held by a non-government organisation?

Non-government organisations, like religious and community organisations, may keep records you need. This fact sheet provides information about requesting records and how knowmore can help.

Why do I need records?

You might need information about:

- the time you spent in out-of-home care, like at an orphanage or home
- the role an institution had in your care arrangements as a child
- a complaint you made to an organisation.

The government might also hold records about your childhood. These include ward files, court records, school records and police reports. If you need to access these, read knowmore's fact sheet '*How do I access records held by a government organisation?*'.

knowmore can advise you about accessing your records.

What are my rights?

You might have a legal right to access your information from non-government organisations.

If an organisation refuses your request, please contact knowmore for advice.

Who should I make a request to?

Your first step is to find out who ran the non-government organisation e.g. a church, community group or charity.

For more information you can search the 'Find & Connect' website.

Using Find & Connect

Find & Connect (www.findandconnect.gov.au; 1800 16 11 09) is a free historical information service about institutional care in Australia.

You can search Find & Connect by the institution's name, location or date. Once you find the institution, look for the button 'Records'.

If you don't know an organisation's name

If you're having trouble finding an organisation's name, please contact knowmore for advice.

If you were a ward of the state, or if the state was involved in your care arrangements, you could also consider accessing your government records (see knowmore's fact

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Image inspired by original artwork by Ngunawal man Dean Bell, depicting knowmore's connection to the towns, cities, missions and settlements within Australia.

knowmore acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters across Australia upon which we live and work. We pay our deep respects to Elders past and present for their ongoing leadership and advocacy.

sheet 'How do I access records held by a government organisation?'). These may tell you which organisations you were in.

How do I request my records?

When you make your request, make sure you clearly describe what records you would like. Make sure you include the name you were known by as a child.

You might need to include a copy of some photo identification so that the organisation knows that they are giving the records to the right person.

What to expect

The older the information you request the less likely it is to be found. Some records may not exist or may have been destroyed. Even if you do find records, they may contain minimal or inaccurate information and may not answer all of your questions.

There may be privacy issues that mean that the organisation may black-out portions of the document to protect another person's right to privacy.

Trauma and emotion

Accessing information about your childhood can have a significant emotional impact. The information may bring up traumatic memories or uncomfortable feelings.

It is a good idea to view your information with someone you trust, like a friend or support person.

Information about support services can be found on knowmore's website below.

How to contact knowmore

- Visit: www.knowmore.org.au
- Free call: 1800 605 762
- Email: info@knowmore.org.au

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