

# Courier Mail

## Sorry to Forgotten Australians won't heal a tortured life

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RAY Carfile finds it hard to accept the Prime Minister's apology to those abused in state and church-run homes. Picture: Glenn Barnes

Source: The Courier-Mail

**IN 1956 three Salvation Army officers tied a rope around Ray Carfile's 10-year-old ankles and lowered him face-first down a dark and mouldy well.**

As the boy's fingernails clawed at the sides of the well the Riverview Training Farm for Boys officers struck him with canes and lowered him deeper into the darkness.

Today Prime Minister Kevin Rudd will offer Mr Carfile an apology, as he will the more than 500,000 "Forgotten Australians" subjected to physical, emotional or sexual abuse in state and church-run homes and orphanages last century.

But Mr Carfile doesn't know what to make of the gesture. He doesn't trust Mr Rudd's motivations. Most "homies" find it difficult to trust anyone.

"Can you imagine the terror in my heart that night?" said Mr Carfile, now 63, talking on the veranda of his

modest Queenslander in Goomeri, west of Gympie. "I remember screaming and I thought somebody else was screaming as well but I realised it was my echo in the well. I wet myself. Then my hands touched the cold water at the bottom of the well and I thought, 'My God, they're going to drown me in here'."

The young Ray blacked out. He woke lying on damp ground with the officers flogging him with a cane for soiling his pants.

"You filthy little pig," they said.

The officers, he learnt later, had wrongly pinned the theft of a handful of electrical fuses on him.

"I was then told that if I ever said anything about the well to anyone I would cop a second dose," he recalled.

It's taken Mr Carlile 53 years to talk about the well. It makes him sick to discuss it.

Mr Carlile was sent to the Riverview boys home at the age of eight after his father had beaten him to the point of unconsciousness and burned his eyebrows with cigarettes.

It was the beginning of what he calls his "long journey of torture", a time in which he was beaten, intimidated and regularly sexually abused by Salvation Army officers.

Mr Carlile was put into Riverview with his younger brother, told their father was dead and ordered to get to work. He was flogged when he tried to comfort his frightened and blubbing younger brother.

He married his wife, Kay, 28 years ago and has three adult children who have only recently realised the extent of abuse their father endured.

Every day since his marriage has been a step forward. But he still has a long way to go. And no words from Kevin Rudd, he said, will ease the journey.

"Sorry what does it mean?" he said. "It doesn't mean a bloody thing to me. No apology and no amount of money in the whole wide world will get back what they took.

"I've got nothing but distrust and hate. And I'm sorry to say that. I'm sorry."

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