

Bid to help forgotten Aussies

BEN PIKE

THEY are the 500,000 "forgotten Australians" who grew up in institutions or other types of public care and were often left with a litany of trauma, neglect and maltreatment.

The first national research study will be launched this week on the adult survivors of childhood institutions, or out-of-home care, dating from 1930 to 1989.

The Long-term Outcomes of Forgotten Australians Study hopes to interview at least 1000 people around the country to help ensure the mistakes of the past are never repeated.

"Concern has grown nationally and internationally about the history of trauma and victimisation experienced by profoundly disadvantaged and vulnerable groups — forgotten Australians, the stolen generation and child migrants — while growing up in institutions and other types of public care, and in their transition into adulthood," chief LOFA investigator Professor Elizabeth Fernandez said.

"They frequently brought to this transition from care a history of trauma, of maltreatment, instability of living arrangements, educational neglect, alienation from their siblings and families and elevated levels of physical and mental health need."

Professor Fernandez said the confidential nature of the research means they may uncover more instances of institutionalised sexual abuse.

However, researchers are just as interested in positive experiences they believe will provide insights into people's courage, resilience and actions that enabled them to survive.

It's hoped their findings, to be handed down towards the end of next year, will improve the lives of 40,000 children currently in out-of-home care.

Speaking to those affected, she said: "This research is important in giving you a voice."

VISIT WWW.FORGOTTENAUSTRALIANS.UNSW.EDU.AU OR PHONE 9385 1516 TO TAKE PART.

LAW OF THE GUN

BIKIE BRAND



Troy Cusens, president of the Rebels, on Facebook on his wedding day with wife Mel.

CUSENS' CALL TO CONDITSIS

At 5.59pm on August 1, 2014, Troy Cusens calls the vice-president of the Rebels Mount Druitt chapter, Michael Conditsis, before he goes to meet Damien Vella.

MC "What's happening?"

TC "Ah nothing bro. I gotta go f... ing ... see Big D. I gotta go see Big D again. Have you f... ing um ... Did you say anything?"

MC "Nah nah. I haven't seen him."

TC "You haven't? F... I just got told to bring my colours. To go see him with my colours."

MC "Are you serious or what?"

TC "I swear to god bro. He just goes come f... ing, not talking very nice to me. He goes, 'Oi, f... I'm at Bringelly. F... ing at a restaurant'. He goes 'bring your colours. F... ing — I'll talk to you then.'"

MC "I haven't f... ing spoke to anyone man."

TC "Alright that's cool. I just want to make sure that's all."

EXCLUSIVE

BRENDEEN HILLS
COURT REPORTER

SENIOR Rebels bikie Troy Cusens knew he was in trouble when he was summoned to a Western Sydney restaurant by the club's national president Damien Vella.

It was August 1 and Vella, known as "Big D", was prepared to interrupt his dinner long enough only to bark one order down the phone line to Cusens: "Bring your colours. F..... — I'll talk to you then", according to documents tendered to court.

Vella became the Rebels national president after his uncle, Alex Vella, was stranded in Malta when Australian authorities cancelled his visa.

Details of the meeting between Cusens and Damien Vella were re-

vealed in Penrith Local Court after Cusens was charged with discharging a firearm and being a member of a criminal organisation.

Cusens, the president of the gang's Mt Druitt chapter, was charged after police alleged he delivered fellow Mt Druitt member Rishaad Christian to bikies from the club's Penrith chapter on July 7 last year. They allegedly shot him three times and beat his face with a baseball bat until it broke, Penrith Local Court heard.

In court, defence lawyer Leo Premutico said Cusens was not aware of the plot to shoot Christian and the evidence did not prove he was at the clubhouse when it occurred.

The NSW criminal justice system will decide if he is guilty of having Christian shot. But the case has also given a rare insight into how Cusens

also had to answer to the gang's internal justice system led by Vella, who conducted his own investigation and concluded Cusens was guilty.

While recovering in hospital, Christian had told Vella that Cusens "set me up", police documents tendered to court said.

Cusens, of Ropes Crossing, allegedly gave the Penrith bikies access to the Mt Druitt clubhouse on Grex Ave, Minchinbury, to launch a surprise attack on Christian, documents state.

Christian thought he was attending an 8pm meeting to "sort some shit out" but was shot and beaten by at least three balaclava-clad men.

After being called to the restaurant, a panicked Cusens called Mt Druitt Rebel Michael Conditsis and allegedly said: "I gotta go see Big D again ... did you say anything? F... I

just got told to ... go see him with my colours," Cusens said. "I swear to God bro... (Vella is) not talking very nice to me. He goes 'bring your colours. F..... I'll talk to you then.'"

Conditsis replied: "You serious? I haven't f..... spoken to anybody man."

At the restaurant, Damien Vella stripped Cusens of his bikie colours, which generally include patches, jackets, and T-shirts bearing the club's insignia.

After leaving the restaurant, Cusens phoned fellow Mt Druitt Rebels bikie Eldin Mujcevic and said: "They took them (my colours)," court documents state.

Cusens grumbled to Mujcevic that Vella believed Christian's version over his. "The shit (Christian is) saying ... (Vella) believes him mate," Cusens allegedly said in a call cap-

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