

17 November 2023

Jessica Fairey  
Editor  
History Council of SA Newsletter  
PO Box 6809  
Halifax Street  
Adelaide 5000



104 Greenhill Road  
Unley SA 5061

t: (08) 8373 8333

f: (08) 8373 8373

e: [admin@purpleorange.org.au](mailto:admin@purpleorange.org.au)

w: [www.purpleorange.org.au](http://www.purpleorange.org.au)

By email: [jessfai@live.com.au](mailto:jessfai@live.com.au)

Dear Editor,

**Re: Newsletter items regarding Highgate Park**

I write to you regarding misleading content and important omissions in relation to two items included in recent History Council of SA newsletters, as well as the nomination form attached to the first item. These items are:

26 September 2023:

**Heritage Register Nomination: Highgate Park**

Recently Peter Harvord submitted a SA Heritage Register Nomination Application for Highgate Park. Previously known as the 'Julia Farr Centre' and the 'Home for Incurables', the site has a history of caring for the disabled community of South Australia.

Peter has given permission for us to link the application, which contains lots of information and history on the site.

View the application here (pdf).

7 November 2023:

**Call for volunteers: Highgate Park Heritage Register Nomination**

Recently Peter Harvord submitted a SA Heritage Register Nomination Application for Highgate Park. Previously known as the 'Julia Farr Centre' and the 'Home for Incurables', the site has a history of caring for the disabled community of South Australia.

He is now looking to submit a National Heritage nomination application - which requires more depth than the state application.

He is searching for volunteers with an interest in the Julia Farr Centre, including its founders Julia Farr and Dr. William Gosse, or more broadly the history of disability care and institutions in South Australia or nationally.

If interested, please contact Peter at [pjhavord1@gmail.com](mailto:pjhavord1@gmail.com)

I recognise these items have been supplied for publication by a contributor, but I am sure the Council will share my desire to clarify the issues raised in order to ensure newsletter readers are more fully informed. Therefore, I respectfully request the following item be published in your next edition please:

-Start -

### **Highgate Park clarification**

Highgate Park is owned by the Home for Incurables (HFI) Trust and its beneficiaries are South Australians living with disability. Therefore, it is essential that South Australians living with disability are at the centre of decision making about the future of the site. Regrettably, there has been a long history of people living with disability being silenced and their views ignored. Often, others have purported to speak for them or to represent their interests despite not having asked or listened. We all have a responsibility to ensure these practices are not perpetuated in the present or the future.

There is a process underway to sell Highgate Park that has the general support of the South Australian disability community. There has been an open multistage consultation process involving more than 360 people, which has determined '*the value of the site to people living with disability is largely the monetary value it provides for the sustainability of the Trust into the future.*' Further, it recommended that there be a suitable memorial developed to honour the legacy of Julia Farr and the lives and experiences of people living with disability who spent time living at the site, noting also that the Trust itself, through its support of its beneficiaries, will be an ongoing testament to this heritage.

Two recent items in this newsletter have referred to the site's history as being one of 'caring for the disabled community'. Although the Home was radical in its origins more than 140 years ago, its history over many decades of operation was much more complex. Some people had positive experiences at the site, but there are others for whom the site is associated with struggle and trauma reflecting a loss of liberty and personal choice per the institutionalisation approaches of past times – times that we have thankfully moved on from.

The consultation process involved detailed deliberation about the history, heritage, and the appropriate next steps for the site. The disability community through consultation determined the site was '*interwoven with the negative connotations of institutionalised care*' and the sale could be seen as '*an important part of creating a fresh and hopeful start*', hence the decision not to continue to use the site for a disability support related purpose or to memorialise the buildings.

The above information is known to the proponent of the belated heritage nomination/s. Any co-opting of a 'disability care' heritage narrative for other purposes or agendas is extremely disrespectful to South Australians living with disability and should cease immediately.

More information about the consultation outcomes is provided in the Report, which is available at <https://yoursay.sa.gov.au/legacy-of-highgate-park>. JFA Purple Orange (which has a long association with Highgate Park) is current facilitating a Working Group

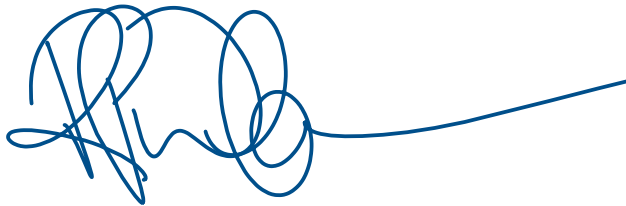
on the future of the HFI Trust involving people living with disability, family members of former residents at Highgate Park, and other allies.

-ends-

Further, we respectfully request the History Council of SA does not allow any attempt to further prosecute this matter or unrelated underlying grievances through content in the newsletter and recognises the impacts that doing so could have on members of the disability community including former residents of Highgate Park. The consultation mentioned above was open publicly to any person wishing to raise any issues and was the appropriate avenue through which to express views about these matters.

If you would like to discuss this further, please contact Tracey Wallace, Strategy Leader, JFA Purple Orange, on (08) 8373 8333 or [traceyw@purpleorange.org.au](mailto:traceyw@purpleorange.org.au).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Robbi Williams  
CEO, JFA Purple Orange