Stolen Generations and the Way Ahead

Edited by Justin Healey
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Stolen Generations and the Way Ahead is Volume 437 in the ‘Issues in Society’ series of educational resource books. The aim of this series is to offer current, diverse information about important issues in our world, from an Australian perspective.

KEY ISSUES IN THIS TOPIC
It has been over twenty years since the release of the landmark Bringing them home report and more than a decade since the national apology was delivered by then-Prime Minister Kevin Rudd to Stolen Generations survivors – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians who have suffered as the result of past government policies and practices of forced child removal and assimilation.

Acknowledging the wrongs of the past was a significant milestone in the history of our nation, but there is still much work to be done to heal the enduring trauma experienced by survivors, families and communities. After two decades, the majority of the Bringing them home recommendations have not been implemented, adding to ongoing distress. In the meantime, this inaction fails to address the escalating national crisis involving continuing removal of indigenous children from their families.

What is the nation’s plan for healing this pain; are we any closer to needs-based funding and a financial redress scheme, dealing with intergenerational trauma and establishing an appropriate policy response? What is the way ahead for ‘unfinished business’ in the long journey towards healing?

SOURCES OF INFORMATION
Titles in the ‘Issues in Society’ series are individual resource books which provide an overview on a specific subject comprised of facts and opinions.

The information in this resource book is not from any single author, publication or organisation. The unique value of the ‘Issues in Society’ series lies in its diversity of content and perspectives.

The content comes from a wide variety of sources and includes:
- Newspaper reports and opinion pieces
- Website fact sheets
- Magazine and journal articles
- Statistics and surveys
- Government reports
- Literature from special interest groups

CRITICAL EVALUATION
As the information reproduced in this book is from a number of different sources, readers should always be aware of the origin of the text and whether or not the source is likely to be expressing a particular bias or agenda.

It is hoped that, as you read about the many aspects of the issues explored in this book, you will critically evaluate the information presented. In some cases, it is important that you decide whether you are being presented with facts or opinions. Does the writer give a biased or an unbiased report? If an opinion is being expressed, do you agree with the writer?

EXPLORING ISSUES
The ‘Exploring issues’ section at the back of this book features a range of ready-to-use worksheets relating to the articles and issues raised in this book. The activities and exercises in these worksheets are suitable for use by students at middle secondary school level and beyond.

FURTHER RESEARCH
This title offers a useful starting point for those who need convenient access to information about the issues involved. However, it is only a starting point. The ‘Web links’ section at the back of this book contains a list of useful websites which you can access for more reading on the topic.
**CHAPTER 1**

**Stolen Generations and the Apology**

### Bringing them home – a national overview

This resource sheet overview by the **Australian Human Rights Commission** is based primarily on the *Bringing them home* report and provides a background to the policies and practices that authorised the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. It is not intended to be used as a comprehensive historical document.

**’UNOCCUPIED’ LAND**

Aboriginal people and their ancestors have occupied Australia for at least 40,000 years. They had their own systems of law, languages and cultural practices. Although Indonesian traders had visited Australia in the 15th century it was not until the mid-1500s that European powers began to consider the possible existence of a ‘great southern land’.

Spanish and Portuguese explorers and merchants often chanced upon Australia’s shores by accident, reporting back to their governments. Dutch explorers such as William Jansz, Dirk Hartog and Abel Tasman made sightings and landings on Australia’s shores. These early colonial powers were mainly interested in commerce rather than settlement.

Some 140 years after the Dutch named this land mass ‘New Holland’, James Cook led the journey on the *Endeavour*. He was commissioned by the British Government to make three voyages, and to consider the trading and settlement possibilities. On 23 August 1770, after landing at Botany Bay, Cook claimed the land for the British Crown and named it New South Wales.

It was some 16 years before the British Government looked at settling New South Wales. Unlike many of Australia’s other colonies, New South Wales was initially set up as a penal colony. The traditional view is that Britain sought to relieve the pressure on its prisons. A growing urban underclass in its cities was causing increased crime and the loss of the American colonies necessitated a search for new places to deport convicts.

On 26 January 1788, the First Fleet landed carrying some 1,000 people, more than 700 of whom were convicts. The British also brought over a system of law, administration and cultural practices. Their vision of settlement was based on the European doctrine of *terra nullius*, or unoccupied land. This justification for settlement was used in spite of contact with Aboriginal people since Cook’s landing. No treaty or agreement for land use was made.

**EARLY COLONISATION**

The New South Wales settlement was soon filled with convicts, colonial administrators and military police from Britain. Resistance and conflict between Europeans and Aborigines began almost immediately. Captain Phillip estimated there were 1,500 Aborigines living in the Sydney region.

Aboriginal communities who lived on or near the settlements were forced back into the territories of other communities. They protested against the colonial land claims and development. This pattern was followed once penal colonies were set up in Van Diemen’s Land (Tasmania) in 1803 and in Queensland in 1824.

Food and natural resources were major problems for settlers – the climate and geography were also very different from that in Europe. Human resources were also limited. There were very few farmers, carpenters and engineers, all needed to create a self-supporting colony. Health was also a problem for the settlers, though not as great a problem as the introduced diseases (carried on the First Fleet) were for Aboriginal people. In 1789 smallpox decimated the Aboriginal population of Port Jackson, Botany Bay and Broken Bay.

In 1790, a second fleet of migrants arrived from Britain – this time most on board were free settlers. Governor Phillip encouraged them to establish farm-
ing and grazing to the north and west of the settlement. Gradually, the colony began to grow and become self-sufficient.

During this expansion and exploration, conflict between Aboriginal peoples and European settlers heightened, with quite violent consequences in many cases. In 1799, a six-year period of resistance to white settlement by Aborigines in the Hawkesbury and Parramatta regions commenced. In Queensland, settlers poisoned Aboriginal people at Kilcoy Station in 1842 and there were attacks on Aboriginal camps at Breakfast Creek in 1860.

The situation was much worse in Tasmania, where an outright guerrilla war took place between Aboriginal people and settlers. In 1830, Governor Arthur tried unsuccessfully to drive all the remaining Aboriginal people in eastern Van Diemen's Land on to the Tasman Peninsula.

Even in the later settlement of Western Australia, violent conflict occurred after areas were settled. For example, at the Battle of Pinjarra Governor Stirling led an expedition and opened fire against a group of indigenous people after they had been involved in conflict with the local settlers.

According to British law, Aboriginal people became British subjects upon settlement. Governor Phillip was instructed to “open an intercourse with the natives” and ensure their protection. Later on, settlements in South Australia and the Northern Territory were established with similar instructions – protection of Aboriginal people. After all, as British subjects (like the free settlers) they were entitled to equal treatment, at least theoretically.

THE FIRST REMOVALS
Apart from this conflict, many Aboriginal children were separated from their families by settlers for use as cheap labour on farms and stations:

... the greatest advantage of young Aboriginal servants was that they came cheap and were never paid beyond the provision of variable quantities of food and clothing. As a result any European on or near the frontier ... could acquire and maintain a personal servant.

(Reynolds, Henry, 1990: With the White People. p.169.)

In 1809, Lachlan Macquarie was appointed Governor. During this time missions and government-run institutions for indigenous children were started. The first of these, the Native Institution, was funded by Governor Macquarie near Parramatta in 1814. It soon became clear to Aboriginal families that its purpose was to distance children from their families and communities. The school was closed down in 1820.

Major changes came after the British Select Committee held its inquiry into the treatment of indigenous people in Britain’s colonies. The report noted the particularly bad treatment of Aboriginal people in Australia. The Committee recommended that a ‘protectorate system’ be established in the Australian colonies.

Under this system, two policies were to be adopted:
- Segregation, by creating reserves and relocating Aboriginal communities to them
- Education, which should focus on the young and relate to every aspect of their lives.

The system took some time to be adopted in Australia. Victoria was the first colony to do so, with its parliament passing the Aborigines Protection Act in 1869 and appointing the Aborigines Protection Board. The Board was responsible for putting the system in place. By 1911, the Northern Territory and every state except Tasmania passed similar laws and appointed similar boards. Most of them also appointed a Chief Protector who was given wide powers to control the lives of Aboriginal people. In some states, including the Northern Territory, the Chief Protector was also made the legal guardian of every Aboriginal child.

Tasmania was the exception to this trend. Until the late 1960s, Tasmanian governments insisted that Tasmania did not have an Aboriginal population, just some ‘half-caste’ people.

MERGING AND ABSORPTION
Note: Throughout this section it is necessary in the interests of accuracy to quote the language of the times. Much of this language was and is offensive to indigenous people. The terms ‘full descent’ and ‘mixed descent’ were not used. Instead categories of ‘full blood’, ‘half caste’, ‘quadroon’ and ‘octoroon’ were applied.
By the turn of the century, it became apparent that although the full-descent Aboriginal population was in decline, the mixed-descent or 'half-caste' population was growing. While this concerned many non-Aboriginal people, the government saw new possibilities for addressing the 'Aboriginal problem' in this trend. The problems posed by segregation, such as ongoing hostility, could be solved by merging the mixed-descent population into non-Aboriginal society. Others saw opportunities for biologically controlling the Aboriginal population.

Employment and education were central to merging Aboriginal people, particularly children, into non-Aboriginal society. State and territory governments shifted their policies to both of these, and did so armed with the powers granted by laws under the protectorate system. Under these policies, Aboriginal children could be separated from their families and sent to work for non-Aboriginal people or to schools/missions. At the same time, they were encouraged to give up their Aboriginality.

Governments began to change the protection legislation to suit this policy. The laws not only expanded the powers of 'Protectors', but also changed the definition of 'Aboriginality'. The new definitions drew differences between 'full-bloods' and 'half-castes', and applied laws differently to each group. This allowed the government to divide the groups and order separations and merging. For example, those defined as having a certain amount of European blood were prevented from living on the reserves and forced either to live in camps or in non-indigenous areas. People within this definition who remained on the reserves were removed.

During the 1920s, every state and territory government opened schools and training institutions. Indigenous children were also sent to missions, usually run by church groups. Many of these institutions were some distance from the reserves, thus further separating children from their families and communities. The children normally lived in dormitories and the education they received covered every aspect of their lives. Indigenous languages and cultural practices were usually forbidden, and the discipline was severe.

Even though governments focused much attention on setting up these schools, they gave them little financial support. Conditions were harsh and the occupants often lacked adequate food, basic facilities and medical treatment. Many institutions were also overcrowded; conditions in the Northern Territory were particularly bad. At The Bungalow, near Alice Springs, 50 children and 10 adults were living in just three exposed sheds. The quality of education was also poor – often it was simply training for manual or domestic labour.

A number of Chief Protectors, such as Dr Cecil Cook (NT) and A.O. Neville (WA), saw in this new policy the possibility of biologically controlling the indigenous population.

While other governments and Chief Protectors did not voice similar opinions, these extreme views provide insight into the possible underlying intentions of the policy in all states and territories. Many practices did target anything that would lead to the continued existence of a 'full-blood' population. For example, young women were the first to be targeted for separation and merging. This was just as much about controlling reproduction as it was about cheap domestic labour.

Despite the force of this new policy, merging failed. While mixed-descent indigenous children were formally merged into non-indigenous society, they simply did not 'become white'. On the contrary, those who were merged simply faced extreme disadvantage on two counts. Firstly, by being separated from their families and communities, and secondly, by facing discrimination when they entered non-indigenous communities. An urban underclass of indigenous people was also starting to grow in the cities.

ASSIMILATING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

In 1937, the first Commonwealth-State Native Welfare Conference was held, attended by representatives from all the states (except Tasmania) and the Northern Territory. This was the first time indigenous affairs were discussed at a national level.

The discussion was dominated by the Chief Protectors from Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory, each of whom presented quite strong arguments in favour of assimilating indigenous people into non-indigenous society.

In spite of previous failings of assimilation policies, the conference agreed that assimilation should be encouraged:

... this conference believes that the destiny of the natives of aboriginal origin, but not of the full bloods, lies in their ultimate absorption by the people of the Commonwealth, and it therefore recommends that all efforts be directed to that end.


In practical terms, this meant another change in laws. After 1940, indigenous children were governed by the general child welfare laws, which also applied to non-indigenous children. Under these laws, a child could only be removed if found to be 'neglected', 'destitute' or 'uncontrollable'. These laws appeared to treat all children equally.
However, in defining ‘neglect’, government officials also considered that poverty came into this meaning, thus justifying a ground for separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families.

Neglect and destitution were also features of most indigenous people’s lives precisely because of the treatment received from a history of colonisation. The application of these general laws only disadvantaged indigenous people further by not addressing the underlying issues.

Unlike previous policies, this assimilation also meant increased monitoring and surveillance of indigenous lives. For example, in some states, welfare workers were employed to inspect houses and monitor child attendance at school. These officers also had very close relationships with the police.

Thus, while the new laws promised change, in practice it was more a case of continued discrimination. The same welfare staff and police who had previously separated indigenous children from their families were now responsible for enforcing the new laws.

During the 1950s and 1960s, even greater numbers of indigenous children were separated from their families to advance the cause of assimilation. This placed an increasing burden on the schools and institutions, which were receiving even less funding. Child welfare departments responded by placing indigenous children in foster homes or putting them up for adoption, rather than sending them to institutions. In 1971, for example, more than 97 per cent of foster-care children in the Northern Territory were indigenous.

By the early 1960s, it was clear that indigenous people were not being assimilated – the policy had failed. Discrimination by non-indigenous people and the refusal of indigenous people to surrender their lifestyle and culture were standing in the way.

The promise of change came in 1967, with the successful constitutional referendum. The referendum altered the constitution to remove references to ‘Aboriginal people’ so that all people in Australia were to be subject to the same laws, and indigenous people would be included in the census. Further, it gave the federal government powers to make laws for indigenous people. As a result, a National Office of Aboriginal Affairs was established.

**SELF-MANAGEMENT AND SELF-DETERMINATION**

Article 31 of the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples describes indigenous self-determination in practical terms:

*Indigenous peoples, as a specific form of exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, including culture, religion, education, information, media, health, housing, employment, social welfare, economic activities, land and resources management, environment and entry by non-members, as well as ways and means for financing these autonomous functions.*

In this context, self-determination is about achieving the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples in Australian society. This involves recognition of the cultural distinctiveness and diversity of indigenous people. Recognition of indigenous customary law and practices is also a vital part of this push for self-determination.

By the early 1970s indigenous people were working with some non-indigenous people to lobby and protest to government for land rights, cultural property rights, recognition of disadvantage suffered from colonisation including the taking away of indigenous children and a range of other social justice issues. The importance of self-determination was viewed by indigenous people as essential to the full realisation of human rights.

Historically, the term self-determination was first applied to indigenous policy by the incoming Whitlam Government in 1972. It replaced the by then largely discredited policy of assimilation, and included plans to address the very high rates of separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families.

The Fraser Government from 1975 treated somewhat from the rhetoric of self-determination in Australian indigenous policy, preferring instead the term ‘self-management’. The retreat was, however, largely symbolic as it overlaid a continuity of institutional development and reform of indigenous policy and programs, most notably in the development of indigenous community organisations and through the introduction of land rights legislation in the Northern Territory. In the same year, the federal government passed the *Racial Discrimination Act*. This law made discrimination on the basis of race unlawful.

State and territory governments were also under pressure from indigenous people and the federal government to bring about change to the way indigenous children were cared for in state- and church-run institutions.
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At the first Australian Conference on Adoption in 1976, a policy based on self-management and indigenous control was spelt out. The attention of child welfare workers was directed to the large numbers of indigenous children who were placed with non-indigenous families.

For the Aboriginal child growing up in a racist society, what is most needed is a supportive environment where a child can identify as an Aboriginal and get emotional support from other blacks. The supportive environment that blacks provide cannot be assessed by whites and is not quantifiable or laid down in terms of neat identifiable criteria...

Aboriginal people maintain that they are uniquely qualified to provide assistance in the care of children. They have experienced racism, conflicts in identity between blacks and whites and have an understanding of Aboriginal lifestyles.

The Hawke and Keating governments both used the term self-determination almost interchangeably with that of self-management through the 1980’s and early 1990’s. The continued activism of indigenous communities and growing awareness among welfare workers led to further changes in government practices. In 1980, Link-Up (NSW) Aboriginal Corporation was established. The service traced family movements and reunited indigenous children with their families. Similar services now exist in every state and territory.

In 1981 the Secretariat of the National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) was established. SNAICC represented the interests at a national level of Australia’s one hundred or so indigenous community-controlled children’s services.

In 1983, the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle was developed and introduced into Northern Territory law. The basic requirement of this Principle was that indigenous families must be the preferred option for placing an indigenous child in need of alternative care. New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania followed this lead. The Principle was also informally introduced in Western Australia and Queensland.

In the 1990s, a number of significant changes to the way indigenous people were viewed by non-indigenous people took place.

The most significant of these were:

- The establishment of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation by law of the federal Parliament in 1990
- The findings of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody in 1991
- The decision of the High Court in Mabo v Queensland in 1992
- The Native Title Act passed by the federal government in 1993
- The establishment of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families in 1995
- The High Court Wik decision in 1996
- The then Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission presents Bringing them home – the Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families presented to Federal Parliament in 1997
- The introduction of the Native Title Amendment Act (Cth) in 1998
- The People’s Walk for Reconciliation in 2000.

BRINGING THEM HOME REPORT

Throughout these reforms, indigenous people also pushed strongly for recognition of the policies and practices that authorised the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families since colonisation. Their lobbying and activism placed the issue on the agenda.

In 1995, the then Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission was asked by the federal government to conduct a National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families. Two years later, the Commission handed down its landmark report called Bringing them home.

The report was a detailed national summary of the history of separations. It expressed difficulty in being able to come up with a definite figure for the number of indigenous children separated from their families; but did estimate that between one in three and one in ten indigenous children were separated from their families and communities between 1910 and 1970. This figure does not account for separations before 1910.

Most importantly, it found that most families had been affected, in one or more generations, by government policies and laws requiring the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families.

LINKS

- Australian Museum Online Indigenous Australia: www.dreamtime.net.au

Note: For recent developments and updates on what recommendations have been implemented from the Bringing them home report, log on to the Social Justice section of the Commission’s website at: www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-social-justice.

1770
James Cook claims possession of the whole east coast of Australia. Cook raises the British flag at Possession Island, off Cape York Peninsula in Queensland.

1788
The First Fleet lands in Port Jackson – British settlement in Australia begins. Clashes between Aboriginal people and the settlers are reported over the next 10 years in the Parramatta and Hawkesbury areas.

1828
The Aborigines Protection Act (Vic) establishes an Aborigines Protection Board in Victoria to manage the interests of Aborigines. The Governor can order the removal of any child from their family to a reformatory or industrial school.

1835
The Aborigines Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act (Qld) allows the Chief Protector to remove local Aboriginal people onto and between reserves and hold children in dormitories. Until 1965 the Director of Native Welfare is the legal guardian of all ‘aboriginal’ children whether their parents are living or not.

1897
The Aborigines Protection Ordinance (SA) makes the Chief Protector the legal guardian of every Aboriginal and ‘half-caste’ child under 16 years old. In the following years, other states and territories enact similar laws.

1909
The Aborigines Protection Act (NSW) gives the Aborigines Protection Board power to assume full control and custody of the child of any Aborigine if a court found the child to be neglected under the Neglected Children and Juvenile Offenders Act 1905 (NSW).

1911
The Aborigines Act (VA) makes the Chief Protector the legal guardian of every Aboriginal and ‘half-caste’ child with additional wide-ranging powers to remove indigenous people to and from reserves.

The Northern Territory Aboriginals Ordinance (Cth) gives the Chief Protector to assume “the care, custody or control of any Aboriginal or half-caste if in his opinion it is necessary or desirable in the interests of the Aboriginal or half-caste for him to do so”. The Aborigines Ordinance 1918 (Cth) extends the Chief Protector’s control even further.

1915
The Aborigines Protection Amending Act (NSW) gives power to the Aboriginal Protection Board to separate indigenous children from their families without having to establish in court that they were neglected.

1935
The introduction of the Infants Welfare Act (Tas) is used to remove indigenous children on Cape Barren Island from their families. From 1928 until 1980 the head teacher on Cape Barren is appointed as a special constable with the powers and responsibilities of a police constable, including the power to remove a child for neglect under child welfare legislation.

1937
The first Commonwealth/state conference on ‘native welfare’ adopts assimilation as the national policy: “The destiny of the natives of aboriginal origin, but not of the full blood, lies in ultimate absorption … with a view to their taking their place in the white community on an equal footing with the whites.” In 1951, at the third Commonwealth/State Conference on ‘native welfare’, assimilation is affirmed as the aim of ‘native welfare’ measures.

1938
Australian Aborigines Conference held in Sydney. Meeting on January 26, the 150th Anniversary of NSW, Aborigines mark the ‘Day of Mourning’.

1940
The NSW Aborigines Protection Board loses its power to remove indigenous children. The Board is renamed the Aborigines Welfare Board and is finally abolished in 1969.

1948
The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is adopted by the newly-formed United Nations, and supported by Australia.

1949

1967
A national referendum is held to amend the Constitution. Australians confer power on the Commonwealth to make laws for Aboriginal people. Aborigines are included in the census for the first time.

1969
By 1969, all states had repealed the legislation allowing for the removal of Aboriginal children under the policy of ‘protection’. In the following years, Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agencies (AICCAcs) are set up to contest removal applications and provide alternatives to the removal of indigenous children from their families.
1971
Neville Bonner is sworn in as Australia’s first Aboriginal senator.

1972
The Aboriginal Tent Embassy is pitched outside Parliament House in Canberra to demonstrate for land rights.

1975

1976
The Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act is passed by Commonwealth Parliament in 1976. It provides for recognition of Aboriginal land ownership, granting land rights to 11,000 Aboriginal people and enabling other Aboriginal people to lodge a claim for recognition of traditional ownership of their lands.

1980

1983
The Aboriginal Child Placement Principle, developed principally due to the efforts of Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agencies (AICCA) during the 1970s, is incorporated in NT welfare legislation to ensure that indigenous children are placed with indigenous families when adoption or fostering is necessary. This is followed in NSW (1987), Victoria (1989), South Australia (1993), Queensland and the ACT (1999), Tasmania (2000) and Western Australia (2006).

1987
Northern Territory elections are held and for the first time voting is compulsory for Aboriginal people.

1988
The Bicentennial of British Settlement in Australia takes place. Thousands of indigenous people and supporters march through the streets of Sydney to celebrate cultural and physical survival.

1991
The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation is established, funded by the Commonwealth Government. Parliament noted that there had not been a formal process of reconciliation to date, “and that it was most desirable that there be such a reconciliation” by 2001. The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody presents its report to the Commonwealth Government. It finds that of the 99 deaths it investigated, 43 were of people who were separated from their families as children.

1992
The High Court of Australia hands down its landmark decision in Mabo v Queensland. It decides that native title exists over particular kinds of lands – unalienated Crown Lands, national parks and reserves – and that Australia was never terra nullius or empty land.

1993
International Year of Indigenous People. The Commonwealth Government passes the Native Title Act 1993. This law allows indigenous people to make land claims under certain situations. Claims cannot be made on freehold land (privately-owned land).

The position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner is established within the Australian Human Rights Commission. The Commissioner’s role is to monitor and report to Commonwealth Parliament on the human rights of Indigenous Australians.

1994
The Going Home Conference in Darwin brings together over 600 Aboriginal people removed as children to discuss common goals of access to archives, compensation, rights to land and social justice.

1996
The High Court hands down its decision in the Wik case. Wik concerned land, which is, or has been, subject to pastoral leases.

1997
The Commission presents Bringing them home, its report on the findings of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families to the Commonwealth Government. The parliaments and governments of Victoria, Tasmania, ACT, New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia all issue statements recognising and publicly apologising to the ‘Stolen Generations’.

1998
The Commonwealth Government amends the Native Title Act. This restricts the way in which native title can be claimed. The 1998 Social Justice Report includes a chapter outlining the responses by churches and other non-indigenous communities to the findings in the Bringing them home report. 26 May 1998 is marked as the first National Sorry Day. Hundreds of thousands of people write messages in approximately 1,000 ‘Sorry Books’ as part of a ‘people’s apology’ to the Stolen Generations.

1999
Federal Parliament passes a motion of “deep and sincere regret over the removal of Aboriginal children from their parents”. Mandatory sentencing in Western Australia and the Northern Territory becomes a national issue. Many call for these laws to be overturned because they have greater impact on indigenous children than on non-indigenous children. The People’s Walk for Reconciliation on 28 May occurs in state/territory capitals throughout Australia.
Australia appears before the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The Committee criticises the Commonwealth Government’s inadequate response to recommendations from Bringing them home: “While noting the efforts by the State party to address the tragedies resulting from the previous policy of removing indigenous children from their families, the Committee remains concerned about the continuing effects of this policy.”

2001
The Northern Territory Government repeals its mandatory sentencing laws.
The Northern Territory Government presents a parliamentary motion of apology to people who were removed from their families.

2002
The first member of the Stolen Generations is awarded compensation in the NSW Victims Compensation Tribunal for the sexual assault and injuries she suffered after authorities removed her from her family.
As part of the Victorian Government’s response to the Bringing them home report, Victoria establishes a Stolen Generations taskforce.

2003
The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner publicly criticises the failure of governments to provide financial and social reparations for members of the Stolen Generation, a national apology, or the appropriate mechanisms for individuals that were forcibly removed to reconnect with their culture.

2004
The Commonwealth Government establishes a memorial to the Stolen Generations at Reconciliation Place in Canberra.
461 ‘Sorry Books’ recording the thoughts of Australians on the unfolding history of the Stolen Generations are inscribed on the Australian Memory of the World Register, part of UNESCO’s programme to protect and promote documentary material with significant historical value.

2005
The National Sorry Day Committee announces that in 2005, Sorry Day will be a ‘National Day of Healing for All Australians’ in an attempt to better engage the non-indigenous Australian community with the plight of the Stolen Generations.
The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) is dismantled by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Amendment Act 2005 (Cth) and replaced by a Commonwealth Government appointed advisory board.
Volume two of the Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey is released. The report says that 12.3% of the carers of indigenous children aged 0-17 in Western Australia were forcibly removed from their families. Compared with other indigenous children, the children of members of the ‘Stolen Generations’ are twice as likely to have emotional and behavioural problems, to be at high risk for hyperactivity, emotional and conduct disorders, and twice as likely to abuse alcohol and drugs.

2006
The Northern Territory Government repeals its mandatory sentencing laws.
The Northern Territory Government presents a parliamentary motion of apology to people who were removed from their families.

2007
The tenth anniversary of the Bringing them home report is recognised around Australia.
The first Stolen Generations compensation case is successful in the Supreme Court of South Australia. The Trevorrow judgement recognised the existence of the policy of removing Aboriginal children from their families and the detrimental long-term effects of that policy on both the removed children and on the wider Aboriginal community. It found that even though the State of South Australia had guardianship powers over Aboriginal children, those powers were formulated for the ‘care and protection’ of Aboriginal children, and did not extend to removal of children from their natural parents.

2008
The federal government publicly apologises to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia for the forced removals of their children throughout history.
For the first time, the Federal Parliament opens for the year with a Welcome to Country.

2009
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2010
The Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is established. The panel’s job is to hear from Australians about the best way to recognise indigenous people in our Constitution.

2012
An Act of Recognition Bill passes through parliament. The Bill...
demonstrates the Parliament’s commitment to acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s unique and special place in our nation’s history.

2013
A 10-year National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan is released. The plan outlines state and federal government priorities in order to close the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life expectancy gap by 2030. The Australian Parliament passes the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People’s Recognition Act 2013 with bi-partisan support, which recognises the need to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Australian Constitution. The Victorian Government appoints Aboriginal man Andrew Jackomos as Victoria’s first Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People. The appointment of an Aboriginal children’s commissioner was a result of the Protecting Victoria’s Vulnerable Children’s Inquiry recommendations.

2014
Adnyamathanha man Adam Goodes, an AFL player and community leader, receives the Australian of the Year Award for his “leadership and advocacy in the fight against racism both on the sporting field and within society”.

2015
Faith Bandler, a political activist and writer, dies at the age of 96. She was well-known for her 10-year campaign leading up to the 1967 Referendum. The 2015 Social Justice Report raises concerns about the growing number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care and includes a section on the ‘Continued importance of the Bringing them home report’.

2016
In response to a shocking report by ABC’s Four Corners program, the Federal Government calls a Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory. Alyawarre woman Pat Anderson AO, wins the 2016 Human Rights Medal for her work to advance the rights and welfare of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Caro Meldrum-Hanna, Mary Fallon, Elise Worthington win the Media Award at the 2016 Human Rights Award for their ABC Four Corners’s episode ‘Australia’s shame’, which exposed the mistreatment of young people in the Northern Territory detention system.

The NSW State Government announces a $73 million reparations scheme for Stolen Generations survivors.

2017
June Oscar AO becomes the first woman to hold the position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner. The 20th anniversary of the Bringing them home report is marked with commemoration events and activities around the country. The Healing Foundation presents a new report to the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition at an event in Canberra. The South Australian state government announces a Stolen Generations Reparations Scheme. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples visits Australia and raises concerns about the growing proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care.

The Uluru Statement calls for the establishment of a First Nations voice to be enshrined in the Constitution. Information is primarily taken from the findings of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families. However, a wide range of other sources were also used. For links to all sources, visit: https://bth.humanrights.gov.au/significance/historical-context-the-stolen-generations

Australian Human Rights Commission.
The following stories were received as submissions to the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families. For additional stories see: www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/stories-report

PAUL

For 18 years the State of Victoria referred to me as State Ward No 54321. I was born in May 1964. My Mother and I lived together within an inner suburb of Melbourne. At the age of five and a half months, both my Mother and I became ill. My Mother took me to the Royal Children’s Hospital, where I was admitted.

Upon my recovery, the Social Welfare Department of the Royal Children’s Hospital persuaded my Mother to board me into St Gabriel’s Babies’ Home in Balwyn... just until Mum regained her health. If only Mum could’ve known the secret, deceitful agenda of the State welfare system that was about to be put into motion – 18 years of forced separation between a loving mother and her son.

Early in 1965, I was made a ward of the State. The reason given by the State was that, ‘Mother is unable to provide adequate care for her son’.

In February 1967, the County Court of Victoria dispensed with my Mother’s consent to adoption. This decision, made under section 67(d) of the Child Welfare Act 1958, was purportedly based on an ‘inability to locate mother’. Only paltry attempts had been made to locate her. For example, no attempt was made to find her address through the Aboriginal Welfare Board.

I was immediately transferred to Blackburn South Cottages to be assessed for ‘suitable adoptive placement’. When my Mother came for one of her visits, she found an empty cot. With the stroke of a pen, my Mother was to be assessed as ‘destitute’. With utter contempt, as if she never existed.

My dark complexion was a problem.

The Gables knew my dark complexion was a problem, constantly trying to reassure prospective foster parents that I could be taken as Southern European in origin.

In January 1970, I was again placed with a foster family, where I remained until I was 17. This family had four natural sons of their own. I was the only fostered child.

During this placement, I was acutely aware of my colour, and I knew I was different from the other members of their family. At no stage was I ever told of my Aboriginality, or my natural mother or father.

The foster family would punish me severely for the slightest thing they regarded as unacceptable or un-Christian-like behaviour, even if I didn’t eat my dinner or tea. Sometimes I would be locked in my room for hours. Countless times the foster father would rain blows upon me with his favourite leather strap. He would continue until I wept uncontrollably, pleading for him to stop.

My Mother never gave up trying to locate me.

Throughout all these years – from 5 and a half months old to 18 years of age, my Mother never gave up trying to locate me.

She wrote many letters to the State Welfare Authorities, pleading with them to give her son back. Birthday and Christmas cards were sent care of the Welfare Department. All these letters were shelved.

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My Mother never gave up trying to locate me.

Throughout all these years – from 5 and a half months old to 18 years of age, my Mother never gave up trying to locate me.
In May 1982, I was requested to attend at the Sunshine Welfare Offices, where they formally discharged me from State wardship. It took the Senior Welfare Officer a mere twenty minutes to come clean, and tell me everything that my heart had always wanted to know. He conveyed to me in a matter-of-fact way that I was of ‘Aboriginal descent’, that I had a Natural mother, father, three brothers and a sister, who were alive.

He explained that his Department’s position was only to protect me and, ‘that is why you were not told these things before’. He placed in front of me 368 pages of my file, together with letters, photos and birthday cards. He informed me that my surname would change back to my Mother’s maiden name of Angus.

The welfare officer scribbled on a piece of paper my Mother’s current address in case, in his words, I’d ‘ever want to meet her’. I cried tears of Relief, Guilt and Anger. The official conclusion, on the very last page of my file, reads:

‘Paul is a very intelligent, likeable boy, who has made remarkable progress, given the unfortunate treatment of his Mother by the department during his childhood.’

Confidential submission 133, Victoria. When Paul located his mother at the age of 18 she was working in a hostel for Aboriginal children with 20 children under her care. She died six years later at the age of 45. Paul’s story appears on page 68 of Bringing them home.

GREG

I was born on Cape Barren. At the time I was taken the family comprised mum, my sister and [my two brothers]. And of course there was my grandmother and all the other various relatives. We were only a fairly small isolated community and we all grew up there in what I considered to be a very peaceful loving community. I recall spending most of my growing up on the Island actually living in the home of my grandmother and grandfather. The other children were living with mum in other places.

Until the time I was taken I had not been away from the Island, other than our annual trips from Cape Barren across to Lady Baron during the mutton bird season.

The circumstances of my being taken, as I recollect, were that I went off to school in the morning and I was sitting in the classroom and there was only one room where all the children were assembled and there was a knock at the door, which the schoolmaster answered. After a conversation he had with somebody at the door, he came to get me. He took me by the hand and took me to the door. I was physically grabbed by a male person at the door, I was taken to a motor bike and held by the officer and driven to the airstrip and flown off the Island. I was taken from Cape Barren in October 1959 [aged 12].

I had no knowledge [I was going to be taken]. I was not even able to see my grandmother [and I had] just the clothes I had on my back, such as they were. I never saw mum again.

To all intents and purposes, I guess my grandmother was looked upon as my mother in some respects because of my association with her and when I was taken there are actual letters on my file that indicate that she was so affected by the circumstances of my being removed from the Island that she was hospitalised, and was fretting and generally her health went on her.

A nursing sister on the Island had my grandmother in hospital and she was in fact writing letters to the Welfare Department to find out, you know, how I was getting on and that sort of thing, and asking if I could go back to the Island for holidays. That was refused. My grandmother was removed from the Island and placed in an aged-care hospital, and I was taken to see her and when I did she had basically lost her mind and she did not know who I was.

It is fairly evident from reading my welfare file that [the teacher] was the eyes and ears of the Welfare Department and that he was obviously sending reports back to them about the conditions on the Island.

There is a consent form on [my] file that mum signed and it did include [my sister and my two brothers] – and their names were crossed out and mine was left. I do not know whether it was because I was at the top or not. I might add that most people that I have spoken to said that mum, whilst she could read her name, could not read or write, and obviously would not have understood the implications of what she was signing. [It] has been witnessed by the schoolmaster.

I was flown off the Island and ... I was flown to where the small planes land at Launceston. I was eventually placed with some people in Launceston. I have some recollection of going to school at some stage. I noted from my file that I was transported to Hobart in 1960 – my recollection of that was being put into a semi-trailer and picked up on the side of the road by some welfare officers down there. I was placed with some people in [Hobart], and I guess, fortunately for me, I could not
have been in better hands because I still maintain a relationship with them; they look on me as their son. They had one daughter but Mrs -- used to care for other foster children and the house was full of other non-Aboriginal children.

I had always wanted to return to the Island but I could never bring myself to hopping on a plane and returning. [It was] thirty years before I went back. [The night I returned] I could not settle. I think I had a cup of tea and I decided I would go in a different direction and I walked around the sand spit and – I do not know, something just made me turn around and look back and I looked to the school and – I just looked back to where we used to live as kids. My whole life flashed before me and I just collapsed in the sand and started crying ...

And when I composed myself as best I could I just sort of reflected on things and my whole life was just racing through my mind and I guess I just wanted to be part of a family that I never had. I just wanted to be with my mum and my grandmother and my brothers and sisters.

Confidential evidence 384, Tasmania. The consent form signed by Greg's mother states the reason for his removal: 'I am a widow, in poor health'. After Greg was taken his mother had another daughter but Greg was not aware of her existence until 1994. One of Greg's brothers states that after Greg went their mother 'was in total despair'. They lived in conditions of extreme poverty in 'a run-down shanty'. One afternoon their mother went drinking and suffered a fatal accident. Later the police came with a warrant to collect the children and flew them to Launceston. The boys were fostered together but each of the girls went to a different family.

The first time the five children were all together was in 1995. Greg's story appears on page 99 of Bringing them home.

EVIE

My grandmother was taken from up Tennant Creek. What gave them the right to just go and take them? They brought her down to The Bungalow [at Alice Springs]. Then she had Uncle Billy and my Mum to an Aboriginal Protection Officer. She had no say in that from what I can gather. And then from there they sent her out to Hermannsburg – because you know, she was only 14 when she had Uncle Billy, 15 when she had Mum. When she was 15 and a half they took her to Hermannsburg and married her up to an Aranda man. That's a no-no.

And then from there, when Mum was 3, they ended up taking Mum from Hermannsburg, putting her in The Bungalow until she was 11. And then they sent her to Mulgoa mission in New South Wales. From there they sent her to Carlingford Girls' Home to be a maid. She couldn't get back to the Territory and she'd had a little baby.

Agnes [witness's sister] and I have met him [their older brother]. We met him when he was 35. He's now 42 so that's not that far away. Mum had him and she was working but she doesn't know what happened to her money. When she kept asking for her money so she could pay her fare back to Alice Springs they wouldn't give her any.

I've got paperwork on her from Archives in New South Wales. There's letters – stacks of 'em – between the Aboriginal Protection Board, New South Wales, and Northern Territory. All on my mother. They were fighting about which jurisdiction she was in – New South Wales yet she was a kid from the Northern Territory. So one State was saying we're not paying because she's New South Wales, they should pay.

In the end New South Wales said to Mum, 'I'll pay your fare back on the condition that because you haven't got a husband and you've got a baby, you leave that baby here'. So she left her baby behind and came back to the Territory.

And then she had me and then my brother and another two brothers and a sister and we were all taken away as soon as we were born. Two of them were put in Retta Dixon and by the time they were 18 months old they were sent down south and adopted. She had two kids, like they were 15 months apart, but as soon as they turned 18 months old they were sent down south and adopted out.

One of them came back in 1992. He just has that many problems. The others we don't know where they are. So it's like we've still got a broken family.

I was taken away in 1950 when I was 6 hours old from hospital and put into Retta Dixon until I was 2 months old and then sent to Garden Point. I lived in Garden Point until 1964. And from Garden Point, Tennant Creek, Hermannsburg. While in Garden Point I always say that some of it was the happiest time of my life; others it was the saddest time of my life. The happiest time was, 'Yippee! all these other kids there'. You know, you got to
play with them every day. The saddest times were the abuse. Not only the physical abuse, the sexual abuse by the priests over there. And they were the saddest because if you were to tell anyone, well, the priests threatened that they would actually come and get you.

Everyone could see what they were doing but were told to keep quiet. And just every day you used to get hidings with the stock-whip. Doesn’t matter what you did wrong, you’d get a hiding with the stock-whip. If you didn’t want to go to church, well you got slapped about the head. We had to go to church three times a day. I was actually relieved to leave the Island.

In 1977 I had three children. In 1977 my oldest was three years old then. I had another one that was twelve months and another one that was two months old. All those kids were taken off me. The reason behind that was, well, I’d asked my girl-friend and so-called sister-in-law if she could look after my kids. She wouldn’t look after my daughter because my daughter’s black. So, she said she’d take the two boys and that was fine. And while I was in hospital for three months – that’s the only reason I asked them to take ‘em ’cause I was going to hospital because I had septicaemia.

I couldn’t get my kids back when I came out of hospital. And I fought the welfare system for ten years and still couldn’t get ‘em. I gave up after ten years. Once I gave up I found out that while I was in hospital, my sister-in-law wanted to go overseas with my two boys ‘cause her husband was being posted there for 12 months from foreign affairs. And I know she brought some papers in for me to sign while I was in hospital and she said they were just papers for their passports. Stupid me, being sick and what-have-you didn’t ask questions – I signed ‘em and found out too late they were adoption papers. I had 30 days to revoke any orders that I’d signed.

And with my daughter, well she came back in ’88 but things just aren’t working out there. She blames me for everything that went wrong. She’s got this hate about her – doesn’t want to know. The two boys know where I am but turned around and said to us, ‘You’re not our mother – we know who our real mother is’.

So every day of your bloody life you just get hurt all the time ...

Confidential evidence 557, Northern Territory. Evie’s story appears on page 147 of Bringing them home.

KAREN

I am a part Aboriginal woman, who was adopted out at birth. I was adopted by a white Australian family and came to live in New Zealand at the age of 6 months. I grew up not knowing about my natural Mother and Father. The only information my adoptive parents had about my birth, was the surname of my birth Mother.

I guess I had quite a good relationship with my adoptive Mum, Dad and sisters. Though my adopted Mother said I kept to myself a lot, while I was growing up. As I got older I noticed my skin colouring was different to that of my family. My Mother told me I was adopted from Australia and part Aboriginal. I felt quite lonely especially as I approached my teens. I got teased often about being Aboriginal and became very withdrawn and mixed up, I really did not know where I belonged.

As a result of this I started having psychiatric problems. I seem to cope and muddle along.

I eventually got married to a New Zealander, we have two boys, who are now teenagers. One of our boys is dark like myself, and was interested in his heritage. I was unable to tell him anything, as I didn’t know about it myself.

My husband, boys and myself had the opportunity to go to Melbourne about 7 years ago on a working holiday for 10 weeks. While in Melbourne I went to the Aboriginal Health Centre and spoke to a social worker, as I had a copy of my birth certificate with my birth Mother’s name on it. The social worker recognised my
Mother’s surname ‘Graham’, and got in touch with my aunty, who gave me my Mother’s phone number.

I got in touch with my birth Mother and made arrangements to meet her. I have a half brother and sister. My birth Mother and Father never married, though my Father knew my Mother was pregnant with me. My Mother did not know where my Father was, as they parted before I was born. My sister decided to call a local Melbourne paper and put our story in the paper on how I had found them after 29 years.

My Father who was in Melbourne at the time, saw the article and a photo of my Mother and myself in the paper. He recognised my Mother and got in touch with her. My Mother and I had been corresponding, after we returned to New Zealand. For her own reasons, she would not give my Father my address, so my Father went through the social service agency and got in touch with me two and a half years ago. I have met my birth Father, as I had a family wedding in Melbourne shortly after he made contact with me, so I made arrangements to meet him.

We kept in contact with one another, but I feel we will never be able to make up for lost time, as my birth parents live in Australia and myself in New Zealand.

I still feel confused about where I belong, it has been very emotional and the result of this caused me to have a complete nervous breakdown. I am on medication daily and am having to see a counsellor to help me come to terms and accept the situation, where I am at right now and to sort out some confused feelings. My adoptive family really don’t want to know too much about my birth family, which also makes it hard.

I feel that I should be entitled to some financial compensation for travel purposes, to enable us to do this. Confidential submission 823, New Zealand. Karen’s story appears on page 244 of Bringing them home.

Australian Human Rights Commission. RightsED  
Apology to Australia’s indigenous peoples

Transcript of the national apology delivered by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd to the Australian parliament on 13 February 2008:

I move:
That today we honour the Indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history. We reflect on their past mistreatment. We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were Stolen Generations – this blemished chapter in our nation’s history.
The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia’s history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.
We apologise for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians.
We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country.
For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry.
To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry. And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry.
We the Parliament of Australia respectfully request that this apology be received in the spirit in which it is offered as part of the healing of the nation.
For the future we take heart; resolving that this new page in the history of our great continent can now be written. We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians.
A future where this Parliament resolves that the injustices of the past must never, never happen again.
A future where we harness the determination of all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to close the gap that lies between us in life expectancy, educational achievement and economic opportunity.
A future where we embrace the possibility of new solutions to enduring problems where old approaches have failed.
A future based on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility.
A future where all Australians, whatever their origins, are truly equal partners, with equal opportunities and with an equal stake in shaping the next chapter in the history of this great country, Australia.

Response to government to the national apology to the Stolen Generations

Tom Calma, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, responds to the national apology delivered by the Prime Minister

Wednesday, 13 February 2008
Member’s Hall, Parliament House, Canberra

Prime Minister, the Hon Kevin Rudd; Opposition Leader, Brendan Nelson; the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, the Hon Jenny Macklin; former Prime Ministers, Professor Bruce Wilson representing the late Sir Ronald Wilson, Stolen Generations patrons Dr Lowitja O’Donoghue and Bobby Randall, NSDC Chair Helen Moran and SGA Chair Christine King, Ministers; Members of Parliament; Senators, members of the Stolen Generations and your families; my indigenous brothers and sisters; and distinguished guests from around Australia and overseas.

May I begin by acknowledging the Ngunnawal peoples – the traditional owners of the land where we meet today and pay my respects to you and to your elders.

I have been asked by the National Sorry Day Committee and the Stolen Generations Alliance; the two national bodies that represent the Stolen Generations and their families, to respond to the Parliament’s Apology and to talk briefly about the importance of today’s events.

I am deeply honoured to be entrusted with this responsibility and to participate in today’s proceedings.

I am particularly honoured to do so in my capacity as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner at the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. The inaugural Social Justice Commissioner, Professor Mick Dodson, was the Co-Commissioner of the national inquiry, along with the then President, the late Sir Ronald Wilson, that culminated in the ‘Bringing them home’ report. The next Social Justice Commissioner, Dr Bill Jonas, contributed greatly to the understanding of the report and the importance of its findings.

Today is an historic day.
It’s the day our leaders – across the political spectrum – have chosen dignity, hope and respect as the guiding principles for the relationship with our first nation’s peoples.

Through one direct act, Parliament has acknowledged the existence and the impacts of the past policies and practices of forcibly removing Indigenous children from their families.

And by doing so, has paid respect to the Stolen Generations. For their suffering and their loss. For their resilience. And ultimately, for their dignity.

Let me tell you what this apology means to me. For many years, my family has been searching in vain to find information about my great-grandmother on my father’s side, who was taken at the turn of the 20th Century.

Recently, Link-Up in Darwin located some information in the Archives. In a document titled ‘list of half-castes in the NT’ dated 2 December 1899, a government official named George Thompson wrote the following about my great-grandmother:

Half-caste May is a well grown girl, is living with her mother in the black’s camp at Woolwonga, her mother will not part with her, she mixes up a great deal with the Chinamen, she only has a narga on.

My great-grandmother’s ordeal was not uncommon and nor was the chilling account – ‘her mother will not part with her’.

This is not about black armbands and guilt. It never was. It is about belonging.

The introductory words of the 1997 ‘Bringing them home’ report remind us of this. It reads:

... the past is very much with us today, in the continuing devastation of the lives of Indigenous Australians. That devastation cannot be addressed unless the whole community listens with an open heart and mind to the stories of what has happened in the past and, having listened and understood, commits itself to reconciliation.

By acknowledging and paying respect, Parliament has now laid the foundations for healing to take place and for a reconciled Australia in which everyone belongs.

For today is not just about the Stolen Generations – it is about every Australian.

Today’s actions enable every single one of us to move forward together – with joint aspirations and a national story that contains a shared past and future.

It is a matter of great sadness that the experiences of the Stolen Generations have been used as a source of division among the Australian community since the release of the ‘Bringing them home’ report. There are many individuals
who have made their name as ‘Stolen Generations deniers and rebuffers’.

This vitriol has re-traumatised many of the Stolen Generations. It has cast doubts on the integrity of many individuals, and ultimately has denied indigenous people basic human dignity and decency.

These are not traits associated with ‘the Australian way’. Nor is it any way to respond to human tragedy.

Let us feel proud that we are now facing the difficult and dark experiences from our past in order to move forward.

Let us also feel proud that – as a nation – we respect our fellow citizens, we care for their plight and we offer our hand in friendship so that we may all enjoy the bounty of this great nation.

Prime Minister, can I thank you for your leadership on this issue and for the support and compassion of your Minister, Jenny Macklin. It is far more difficult to try and unite people than it is to divide them.

Your efforts should be praised universally for attempting to create a bridge between the many diverse elements of our society.

To the leader of the Opposition, can I also acknowledge your leadership. It is of great significance that this motion was passed with bipartisan support.

For too long, indigenous peoples have been used as a political football. More often than not, this has promoted fear, misunderstanding, intolerance and inaction.

And to all Parliamentarians, I say – let today be a new beginning, not an end point.

Last month, I facilitated discussions between the government and Stolen Generations groups about the apology. The overwhelming message from those meetings was that this should be seen as the first step in a partnership.

The Stolen Generations have needs that have yet to be met, mainly due to underfunding of Link-Ups and other support organisations. There remains a pressing need for specific assistance tailored to the particular circumstances of those forcibly removed from their families.

And there are many recommendations of the ‘Bringing them home’ report that have not been implemented.

In fact, there has been little attempt to even consider many of these recommendations at the federal or state level in recent years, or for them to be implemented systematically across all jurisdictions. To the Premiers and state and territory government representatives here today, we urge you to join the partnership to address the unfinished business.

Prime Minister, I mentioned earlier that it is harder to try and unite people than it is to divide them. This is because if people have hope, they also have expectations.

The consultations between your government and Stolen Generations groups identified a number of elements to build upon from today.

These include:

• Committing to a partnership with Stolen Generations groups, as well as Link-Ups and other service providers, with ongoing consultation and participation;

• Committing to a comprehensive government response to the needs of the Stolen Generations, as identified in the ‘Bringing them home’ report; and

• Adopting a whole-of-government approach – across departments and across governments – to achieve this.

There is much hope that today’s apology can create the impetus for a renewed partnership between the federal government and state and territory governments to fully implement the recommendations of the ‘Bringing them home’ report. It is timely that the federal government take a leadership role in developing a national process to make this happen.

Finally, can I acknowledge the support of the many millions of non-indigenous Australians who have walked with us on the path of reconciliation and justice, and can I pay tribute to the members of the Stolen Generations, for your incredible resilience, stoicism and dignity in the face of untold suffering.

Let your healing, and the healing of the nation, begin.

Thank you.

Speech by Tom Calma, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

13 February 2018 marks the 10th anniversary of the National Apology to the Stolen Generations, who suffered as a result of past government policies of forced child removal and assimilation. It is important, that as a nation, we commemorate this significant milestone, acknowledging the wrongs of the past, while reflecting on the work that still needs to be done to address the impacts of unresolved trauma.

1. Who are the Stolen Generations?

The term ‘Stolen Generations’ refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians who were forcibly removed as children from their families and communities and placed into institutional care or with non-indigenous foster families. Many of these removals occurred as the result of official laws and policies aimed at assimilating the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population into the wider community. The authorities involved were from government, welfare and church organisations.

The 1997 Bringing them home report (resulting from the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission’s Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families), found that between 1 in 10 and 3 in 10 children were forcibly removed in the years between 1910 and 1970 (removal practices began as early as the mid-1800s). The Western Australian and Queensland Governments have confirmed that during that period, all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in their States were affected by the forced removal of children.

It’s important to understand that the term Stolen Generations refers to those children who were removed on the basis of their race (proof of neglect was often not required). The predominant aim of the forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families was to absorb or assimilate children with mixed ancestry into the non-indigenous community.

As Brisbane’s Telegraph newspaper reported in May 1937:

“Mr Neville [the Chief Protector of WA] holds the view that within 100 years the pure black will be extinct. But the half-caste problem is increasing every year. Therefore their idea is to keep the pure blacks segregated and absorb the half-castes into the white population.”

2. How do we know about the stories of the Stolen Generations?

After speaking to nearly a thousand witnesses, authors of the Bringing them home report documented extensive evidence of past practices and policies which resulted in the removal of children. It also detailed the conditions into which many of the children were placed and discussed the ongoing impact of unresolved trauma, on individuals, their families and the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The Inquiry received nearly 800 formal submissions from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, government and church representatives, former mission staff, foster and adoptive parents, doctors and health professionals, academics, police and others.

Between 1997 and 2001 all State and Territory governments acknowledged past practices and policies of forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children on the basis of race and apologised for the trauma these policies have caused. The National Apology was made seven years later.

3. Why was the National Apology so important?

The Bringing them home report found that forced removal has had life-long and profoundly destructive consequences for those taken. These policies continued right up until the 1970s and many of those affected by the trauma are still alive today.

Stolen children lost connection to family, land, culture and language and were taken to homes and institutions where they were often abused, neglected and unloved. The mothers, fathers and family who were left behind also suffered from the loss.

One witness said:

“It never goes away. Just ‘cause we’re not walking around on crutches or with bandages or plasters on our legs and arms, doesn’t mean we’re not hurting. Just ‘cause you can’t see it doesn’t mean ... I suspect I’ll carry these sorts of wounds ‘til the day I die. I’d just like it to be not quite as intense, that’s all.”

Confidential Evidence 580, Queensland, Bringing them home report.

The first step in healing trauma is often the acknowledgment of truth and the delivery of an apology. The release of the Bringing them home report was followed by a wave of apologies to the Stolen Generations by state parliaments, judges, churches, civic associations, trade
unions and ethnic groups. However, it remained the responsibility of the Australian Government, on behalf of previous Australian Governments who administered this wrongful policy, to acknowledge what was done.

4. Why was the word ‘sorry’ important as part of the Apology?
The word ‘sorry’ in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and cultures holds special meaning, often used to describe the rituals surrounding death (Sorry Business). Sorry, in this context, expresses empathy, sympathy and an acknowledgment of loss rather than responsibility.

5. Why did today’s Australians apologise for something they weren’t responsible for?
The Apology was not an expression of personal responsibility or guilt by individual Australians. It was provided by the Australian Government in recognition of policies of past governments. Similarly, the former Australian Government apologised to Vietnam veterans for the policies of previous governments. No individual Australian was asked to take personal responsibility for actions of past governments. Saying sorry was about acknowledging the pain and suffering of the individuals, their families and communities.

6. Why should we apologise when many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are better off because they were removed from bad circumstances?
Evidence shows that the overwhelming impact of the forced removal policy was damaging and that most children were removed for the reason of assimilation. While some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were removed from their families on genuine welfare grounds, this was not the experience of the majority.
Of those who went to foster homes, almost a quarter of witnesses to the Bringing them home inquiry reported being physically abused and 1 in 5 reported sexual abuse. Of those sent to institutions, 1 in 6 children reported physical abuse and 1 in 10 reported sexual abuse. Many others reported deprivation, neglect and suffering from the loss of their family and culture.

7. Was the Apology a step towards compensation for the Stolen Generations?
The Bringing them home report recommended establishing a national compensation fund for people affected by the forcible removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The idea of the fund was to offer reparation to those affected and avoid the courts having to deal with costly individual litigation. The United Nations Human Rights Committee has also recommended the Australian Government adopt a mechanism to compensate victims of the Stolen Generations, similar to steps taken by other countries.
Since then, three states (NSW, Tasmania and South Australia) have set up compensation funds or reparations schemes to address the ongoing trauma experienced by children forcefully removed from their families. We have also seen a range of processes set up to support the victims of abuse in state care or sexual abuse in institutions, which includes some Stolen Generations members.
A National Reparations Framework would ensure fair and equal access to compensation and a comprehensive scheme that provides a package of measures to heal trauma at a personal, community and intergenerational level. The Healing Foundation’s ongoing study to assess contemporary needs for Stolen Generations will provide vital information that could inform this framework.
8. What has the Federal Government done for the Stolen Generations since 2008?
On 13 February 2009, the first anniversary of the Apology, the Australian Government announced a healing foundation to address trauma and aid healing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This followed consultation with communities.

Since then, The Healing Foundation has:
• Assisted more than 45,000 people in their personal healing journeys
• Funded almost 170 community-based healing projects, and
• Provided nearly 500 organisations with grants for local commemorative events.

9. How important was the Apology to reconciliation?
These formal apologies were an important step towards building a respectful new relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. Many Stolen Generations members felt that their pain and suffering was acknowledged and that the nation understood the need to right the wrongs of the past.

In this way, the Apology lays the groundwork for us to work more effectively towards achieving better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

10. Why is it important to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the National Apology?
It’s a milestone that all Australians can be proud of and it’s important to bring all Australians together to commemorate that historic moment. Many of the Stolen Generations, their families and communities are still feeling the hurt, pain and loss from being forcibly removed from their families and by remembering what happened, as part of those commemorations, we are supporting ongoing healing.

The anniversary is also a time to reflect on the work that still needs to be done to address the unresolved trauma caused by the forced removal of tens of thousands of children from their homes and communities.

The Bringing them home report drew a link between this trauma and contemporary social and health problems in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Recent research shows that the spread of trauma from one generation to the next, is an underlying cause of issues like family violence, substance abuse, suicide, high incarceration rates and the disproportionate number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children entering the protection system.

We have found that those affected by the forced removal of children – the Stolen Generations and their children and grandchildren – are:
• 50% more likely to be charged by police
• 30% less likely to be in good health, and
• 10% less likely to have a job.

SORRY DAY
• National Sorry Day is an annual event held in Australia on 26 May.
• Sorry Day offers the broader Australian community an opportunity to acknowledge the profound impacts of the forcible removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families under the direction of past government laws and policies spanning over 150 years. These children have come to be known as the Stolen Generations.
• Each year on this day, ceremonies, marches, speeches and presentations are held around the country to commemorate Sorry Day, during which Australians express regret for the historical mistreatment of Aboriginal people.
• The first Sorry Day was held on 26 May 1998, one year after the report Bringing them home was first tabled in parliament, having recommended that a national day of observance be declared.
• On 13 February 2008 – more than 10 years after the Bringing them home report was released – then prime minister Kevin Rudd made an historic, formal apology to Australia’s indigenous peoples; particularly to the Stolen Generations and their families and communities, for laws and policies which had “inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians”.
• The apology included a proposal for a policy commission to close the gap between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians in life expectancy, educational achievement and economic opportunity.
• The human rights-based Close the Gap campaign for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health equality was established in 2006, with the campaign blueprint adopted by the Australian government in 2008.
• Sorry Day is an important part of the healing process for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. As part of this process, the Healing Foundation was established one year after Mr Rudd’s apology.
• The Healing Foundation works with members of the Stolen Generations to help them find their own healing responses to past governments’ forced removal policies.

TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE APOLOGY

Speech commemorating a decade since the National Apology was made to the Stolen Generations, by June Oscar AO, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner

INTRODUCTION

I pay my respects to all those here today elders, past and present, to all the members of the Stolen Generations, and their families who are in this room and beyond. Thank you to the organisers of this event, in particular Mark Waters and his team at Reconciliation South Australia.

I would also like to acknowledge the Patrons of Reconciliation SA, Professor Lowitja O’Donoghue and Hon Chris Sumner and the co-chairs of Reconciliation SA, Professor Peter Buckskin and Helen Connolly who is also Commissioner for Children and Young People, and thank you to the Minister Hon. Kyam Maher for your time earlier this morning, there are so many others, and I thank you all.

Today and tomorrow we will spend time as a nation recognising and reflecting on past atrocities inflicted upon us, and remember our remarkable tenacity to survive, to continue to love and care for one another in reconstructing the vibrant communities we have always had that in so many instances governmental policies have attempted to dismantle in our lifetimes.

I want to acknowledge our young ones in the room too, the elders of the next generations who also feel the ramifications of the past in the living memories of their parents and grandparents. It is our youth who are the vessels of future lessons, thoughts, actions, and many good and exciting deeds.

When our families nurture our young, it is to build a foundation of strength for them to believe and know their dreams are achievable, while also knowing that who they are as the First Peoples of this land is not only accepted, but embraced and celebrated by this nation.

When we live and grow without fear of oppression, discrimination or assimilation, we are free to be all of who we are, and all of who we want to be. As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, we are Australian, we have many linguistic and cultural heritages, and we are distinctly the First Peoples of this land. This freedom in an individual and collective expression of identity that flourishes in an integrated multicultural society is how greatness in a nation is realised.

In many ways, this speech is for you: our young ones, to remind you to be fearless in all that you are. Reflecting on the past, and understanding how it builds our future, is about igniting hope to set a path ablaze that lights a world of endless possibilities, where fresh growth is nourished by the fertility of the past. I am a firm believer that it is in the recognition of all aspects of our past, of who we are and who we want to be, that opens the door to a wondrous future.

So to fling those doors wide open, we are here on this morning to mark the 10th anniversary where this nation said ‘Sorry’ for past government policies of forced child removals and assimilations. It was a long-awaited ‘Sorry’ that sung out to our courageous forbearers. This sorry was spoken to us all, but importantly directed to our Stolen Generations.

It was a momentous occasion that marked one significant point in a long and continuing journey.

When we live and grow without fear of oppression, discrimination or assimilation, we are free to be all of who we are, and all of who we want to be.

BRINGING THEM HOME

In appreciating what brought us to the national apology, last year also marked the 20th anniversary of the release of the Bringing them home report. It is an inquiry that sets out the haunting truth of our Stolen Generations.

The National Inquiry was conducted by my predecessor, Professor Mick Dodson, at the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and among its many findings, concluded that from 1910 to 1970, between 1 in 10 and 1 in 3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were forcibly removed from their families.

The sheer scale of these numbers is hard to comprehend. What they make clear is that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families have been affected by this period of Australia’s history. Whether a child was directly taken from the arms of a family or not, entire communities connected through skin and kinship, intimate relationships with place, country, language
and spirituality, felt every single removal.

The Stolen Generations was a process that systematically attempted to erase both our indigenous personhood, and nationhood, and in doing so it severely diminished our human rights. The removal of our children was an attack on our very existence.

In opening, the report states that the matters discussed are so personal and intimate, laden in distress, suffering and courage that it is no ordinary report. The report states that we can only address a current reality of devastation if we as a nation, indigenous and non-indigenous people commit to reconciliation.

The first step to reconciliation, it recommends, for our Stolen Generations, the victims of gross human rights violations, is the acknowledgement of truth and the delivery of an apology.

THE APOLOGY

It is with this redress of justice and the full realisation of our human rights in mind, that I, like many of you are reflecting on the moment the Prime Minister of the time Kevin Rudd delivered the apology to our people 10 years ago tomorrow. It is both a sombre and enlivening reflection. A moment in our Australian history where as a nation we experienced an outpouring of support for our First Nations which drove a collective determination for a renewed spirit of national healing and reconciliation.

I want to set the sentiment of what I will propose today by reiterating a few of Prime Minister Rudd's lines and helping us all to remember what an apology truly means.

He said, and I quote:

“The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia’s history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.

We apologise ... For the future we take heart ... A future where we harness the determination of all Australians, indigenous and non-indigenous, to close the gap ... A future where we embrace the possibility of new solutions to enduring problems where old approaches have failed.”

Our nation said sorry to make amends, to right past wrongs, to stop repeating mistakes, and find innovative solutions and open the doors to the future I’ve spoken of.

The question must be asked, 10 years on, how do we get to this future, how do we listen to the truth, to what works, and then enact it?

THE ROLE OF THE COMMISSIONER

As the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner of the Australian Human Rights Commission, I feel a responsibility in many aspects of my work to consider where we are at as a nation in delivering the reparations that were recommended in Bringing them home.

These suggested reparations are complete in nature. They include and acknowledge the importance of mon-etary compensation but at the same time move beyond. They understand that life cannot simply be defined in a figure – no form of financial compensation can rectify the suffering. Instead, these were reparations designed as a legacy to set into motion a process of rehabilitation, recovery and healing across generations that would involve the entire Australian nation in multiple acts of reconciliation.

The apology being one of these acts.

Let’s be clear, reparations have great moments of significance and symbolism which we mark in anniversary as we are doing now, but they cannot and will never be a tick-the-box exercise. We do not make amends simply by saying sorry, we must act on the words. Achieving justice when grave injustices have been done is complex, challenging and extremely hard work, which can never be left partially complete.

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families have been affected by this period of Australia’s history. Whether a child was directly taken from the arms of a family or not, entire communities connected through skin and kinship, intimate relationships with place, country, language and spirituality, felt every single removal.

Pivotal to achieving this are the principles of justice and human rights upheld by the Australian Human Rights Commission. Core to my role as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioner is advocating for the full realisation and implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

The Declaration is underpinned by four guiding principles: self-determination; participation in decision making and free, prior and informed consent; respect for and protection of culture; and non-discrimination and equality. These principles provide the most comprehensive framework to ‘righting past wrongs’, for changing behaviours and delivering a true and complete apology.

This is what the apology is a part of, it is both the symbolic and the substantive.

NATIONAL REPARATIONS

That is why we must commit to a national reparation scheme, grounded in and constructed by the principles of the Declaration – a scheme which is both non-partisan and long-term to guarantee that we never repeat the Stolen Generations and the many resulting manifestations of harm. This was the call made in Bringing them home, and I continue to sing it out, loud and clear today.

I applaud organisations such as the Healing Foundation and Reconciliation Australia, prominent national bodies supporting the work of countless communities across the country to do the healing and reconciling work required to achieve this, and the states and territories who have implemented reparation processes.
I acknowledge South Australia as being a forerunner in this act. In ensuring that both members of the Stolen Generations and their children and children’s children receive the monetary compensation owed to them.

I have always said that it is everyone’s responsibility to reconcile from the intimate to the local and regional. However, what we are dealing with here is a national tragedy and a need for nation-wide reconciliation and healing. We cannot move forward with a patchwork approach. We must have a federal approach to settlement that tells a greater narrative of nationhood.

When we speak from a position of nationhood, we tell a complete story. The legacy of the Stolen Generations is not a South Australian issue, or a Victorian or New South Wales one, it has left a dark shadow from history across the entire continent. Therefore, it demands national restitution.

It was the structural authority of this nation that delivered injustice. It will be the unifying force and power of our national ethos, and a policy and legislative framework securing our human rights and creating freedoms for all Australian citizens to prosper that will deliver our justice and ongoing reconciliation.

But, where we are at currently is not good enough.

Two weeks ago, the Productivity Commission released figures showing that the number of children in out-of-home care has doubled in the 10 years since the apology. In 2007-08 there were 9,070 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care. And now, in 2016-17 there were 17,664. This is an 80% increase in the rate of removals.

At the same time Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are the fastest growing prison population in Australia. Currently, they comprise 34% of women behind bars but only 2% of the adult female population in Australia. A great number of women convicted are committing petty crimes such as fine defaulting or driving without a licence. As women move in and out of incarceration it becomes harder to nurture, care and parent children, to build resilience and reconnect. All too often children are taken away leaving women in deeper anguish, and the cycle of imprisonment, removal and trauma is compounded.

And today the Prime Minister is delivering the annual Close the Gap report to parliament. Our abilities to close the gap in health disparities are being blocked at every turn because we are refusing to address the intrinsic interconnection of all social, economic, cultural and spiritual aspects of our life – what policy frameworks term the cultural and social determinants of our health.

I spoke at the Closing the Gap parliamentary breakfast last week insisting that governments set targets that are adequately resourced and implemented so we don’t let unmet targets slip us by time and again. Instead we commit to programs and policies that work to guarantee we close the gap.

Calls by people such as Andrew Jackomos to put Children’s Commissioners in each state and territory for greater governance oversight and accountability of programs and strategies to address harms as well as enhance our health and wellbeing, is essential. We need these determined measures and structural changes to make people’s voices count and ensure the hauntings of the past are not forever present in our futures, that the gap closes and our aspirations and successes grow.

Bringing them home said that the testimonies of the Stolen Generations make blatant that the past remains with us today. The Stolen Generations do remain with us today, and the consequences of present policies are all too familiar. If we don’t act today, the devastation of removal will remain with us into the future.

LISTENING TO TRUTH

To act, we must listen and respond to the truth of people’s experiences.

At the launch of the Commission’s educational resource and website for the Bringing them home report late last year we heard a deeply moving and honest account of the personal impact of the Stolen Generation from Uncle Michael Welsh, a survivor of the Kinchela Boys Home in New South Wales.

Uncle Michael was and remains incredibly courageous, as are all of those who tell their stories. Uncle Michael talked of how the anger built within him while abuses persisted, and he was blamed without justification for the inhumane punishments he received from the adults who were entrusted with his care. Fighting, aggression and humour were the complex behaviours he displayed which helped him to survive, and protect himself. As a child, he had no way out, nor did he have any option to leave. He had to survive.

As he spoke, he touched his chest and his head and explained how he only learnt recently that the two are connected, that when our heart hurts so does our brain, the brain experiences wounds too. That the anger he has shown, and the crimes committed in his life are the wounds he couldn’t see that haven’t healed, they have been the acts of survival. Trauma leaves a biological, mental and emotional imprint. When left unresolved and unrecognised it can be a driver of many damaging and at times criminal actions.

In telling his story, Uncle Michael leaves us with a reality that we and the Australian Government cannot fail to ignore. Our contemporary harms are intrinsically linked to past policies and resulting traumas. Little of what happens today occurs in historical isolation. Harmful substance use, domestic and family violence, and one of the most devastating – the ongoing removal of our children at ever increasing rates, are all consequences of a perpetuating cycle of intergenerational trauma. The truth is that our national policy and legislative response has not been designed to deal with this complex reality.

Just as achievement builds a legacy of hope, aspiration and success; grief and unrecognised and unresolved trauma can build anger, sadness and harm, leading to unjust social, economic and structural inequalities which
persist from one generation to the next.

For the future that builds on strengths and success to prevail we must continue to unveil the truth. Because it is the process of truth-telling that reconciles families, communities and nations.

**THE ULURU STATEMENT**

Of course, the rejection, at this stage, of the Uluru Statement, and more specifically a constitutionally-enshrined voice to Parliament, can seem like there is no political will to hear our voice, our truths and the solutions we have which can substantially improve our lives. The citizens of this country, indigenous and non-indigenous, all want a strong, just and equal nation and because of this, we can and should continue to call for the Parliament to work with us.

There are other critical points in the Uluru Statement. I feel it is necessary to draw these points out now when considering the ongoing importance of our voice in recognising injustice and determining our future of this nation that does not stop and never falters with a constitutional roadblock.

One, is the need for structural reform so none of us are condemned to a life trajectory of intergenerational trauma – the removal of our children, incarceration and criminality, and then silencing the pain of our powerlessness with alcohol, and other substances.

The second, and fundamentally important to this speech today is the Makarrata Commission, a Commission to enable the building of just and self-determining relationships with an Australian Government driven by a process of truth-telling. This truth-telling would allow an honest and full understanding of our entire indigenous history, colonisation, the building of this nation, Stolen Generations and intergenerational trauma. The process would be healing, restorative and reconciling.

A Commission such as this can set our governance agendas. By encouraging truth to be told, at every table, we will be better placed to respond to people’s traumas, and needs, identify and overcome structural barriers with solutions grown from the lived experience of people who experience those structural barriers first hand, while truthfully living out our dynamic and enlivening contemporary realities.

This truth-telling is as exciting and real in what it can achieve, as it is hard, painful, and disturbing. It forces us to look at all dimensions of our strengths as well as all our powerlessness.

Without truth, our voices are not heard in our entirety, our strength and resilience is not fully appreciated and the deep well of resources we have as Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander people for survival, health, wellbeing and vibrancy, demonstrated powerfully by the survivors of the Stolen Generations, will not be integrated effectively into the policy, institutional and legislative structures which affect our day-to-day lives and the future that is on its way.

With the rates of child removal and incarceration of women increasing as I have spoken about, this dialogue of national truth-telling could not come fast enough.

In many ways, the work of the Social Justice Commissioner is designed to sow these seeds of truth. I and my team are beginning a fundamental part of this process over the course of this year.

**THE WOMEN’S VOICES PROJECT**

We have launched the Wiyi Yani U Thangani, Women’s Voices, national engagement process. This year we are travelling this continent to talk to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls about the truth of their lived reality. To say to them that nothing that you feel or dream is unspeakable. That whatever structural barrier or inequality that has stood in your way, we can confront.

Your strengths must be recognised by others and by yourself. Most importantly your strength must be recognised by the Australian nation and incorporated into legislation and policy that responds to your needs and enables you, your families and communities to achieve your aspirations, while also always having the security and knowledge that your home is yours, that you can stay and return home whenever you want or need.
All women and girls have the right to live a life free of violence, exercise their voice and cultural expression, own initiatives to improve their law and justice outcomes, and live the full respect and dignity of personhood that their human rights bring.

The Stolen Generations was a process that systematically attempted to erase both our indigenous personhood, and nationhood, and in doing so it severely diminished our human rights. The removal of our children was an attack on our very existence.

All our mothers and grandmothers have a right to keep their children in their arms and at home, while being able to ensure their safety. For our systems to be responsive in enabling this to happen, to dramatically reverse the rate of children in out-of-home care, and for services to be driven by outcomes which achieve generational health and wellbeing, the need to hear the voices of our women and girls becomes even more pivotal and urgent.

The realisation of their rights, and being able to live them, are fundamental to keeping our children with families and kin, in stable and safe environments so they can be nurtured into strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and men who carry the flame of intergenerational responsibility, knowledge and care on into a future that burns bright with their light.

I know firsthand the remarkable strength of women to survive against the odds to protect their children with a love that never ceases. In Bringing them home we recorded some of these stories, and it is all too necessary today to keep recording and telling those stories to respond with new insights to fresh and old challenges. In the Kimberley when I was the Deputy Director of the Kimberley Land Council, I assisted in collecting testimonials for the Bringing them home inquiry.

I listened to old women, on country, pointing to the remnants of institutions they had been removed to and telling stories of their treatment. There was both sadness and laughter. Together as children without the support of their families, they gave the nurture and care to one another that they no longer received from their mothers. They mended the broken chains of familial ties as best they could.

There is nothing easy about hearing these stories, nothing easy about what people have felt and the damage that has been inflicted on families, but what always triumphed in the truth of these stories was a fierce spirit of resistance, resilience, love and care. In the Kimberley, we found that 1 in 4 children were removed. I, like all of you, know the survivors of the Stolen Generation, because they are us, or they come from our families. We must celebrate them and never forget their stories, they are all our stories, we live and learn with them in mind and heart, and we survive and thrive together.

In continuing to search out the truth, we honour the profound courage and strength of the Stolen Generation to never let silence settle on injustice. We continue to hear your truth and through your voice and the voices of others, no matter how long it takes, together we will heal, and together as a nation we will deliver justice.

FOOTNOTES
9. For more information on the healing foundation and the work they do across the country in understanding trauma through healing see their website at http://healingsfoundation.org.au (viewed 7 February 2018); and for more information on Reconciliation Australia please see www.reconciliation.org.au (viewed 7 February 2018).

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BRINGING THEM HOME: 20 YEARS ON

Although it was published twenty years ago, the Bringing them home report remains significant today, according to the Australian Human Rights Commission.

B ringing them home was the name given to the final report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families conducted by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (now called the Australian Human Rights Commission).

The National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families was established by the Attorney-General in 1995.

Over two years, the national inquiry took oral and written testimony from over five hundred Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia, as well as from indigenous organisations, foster parents, state and territory government representatives, church representatives, other non-government agencies, former mission and government employees and individual members of the community.

The 689-page final report, tabled in Parliament on 27 May 1997, includes many of these personal testimonies as well as 54 recommendations to support healing and reconciliation for the Stolen Generations, their families and the Australian public more broadly.

A LANDMARK REPORT

The calling of the national inquiry, and the release of the Bringing them home report, raised the awareness of the Australian public of the historical policies of forced removal, as well as the ongoing impacts. The response of many Australians was shock and horror. While the government was slow to respond to the report, the public was not.

As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Mick Dodson said a few weeks after the report was released:

In the last weeks we have seen a most extraordinary turn of events. Day after day and now week after week the newspapers and airwaves have been jammed with talk about our families and children. Day after day the letters pages filled with the reactions of ordinary Australians, horrified at the truths they never knew. Never before have so many Australians turned their attention to our families. Never before has Australia really known or cared about our children. Children taken from the arms of their mothers. Taken from their cultures.'

For many of the people removed from their families as children, the national inquiry provided the first chance to tell their stories, and have their pain publicly acknowledged. In particular, many spoke of the significance of having their stories heard by an official government body. For many people, the act of telling their stories was an important step in their healing journey.

A LASTING IMPACT

The present plight, in terms of health, employment, education, living conditions and self-esteem, of so many Aborigines must be acknowledged as largely flowing from what happened in the past. The dispossession, the destruction of hunting fields and the devastation of lives were all related. The new diseases, the alcohol and the new pressures of living were all introduced. True acknowledgment cannot stop short of recognition of the extent to which present disadvantage flows from past injustice and oppression ... Sir William Deane, Governor-General of Australia in his submission to the National Inquiry

Though it has been twenty years since the report was published, Bringing them home remains significant today. Many of the report’s recommendations have not yet been implemented, members of the Stolen Generations and their families continue to be affected by the trauma caused by forced removal and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are still removed from their families at a very high rate.

The traumatic experiences of being forcibly removed from their families remain with many members of the Stolen Generations: “Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been affected by the Stolen Generations. The resulting trauma has been passed down to children and grandchildren, contributing to many of the issues faced in indigenous communities, including family violence, substance abuse and self-harm.”
These lasting impacts were well-documented by the national inquiry, as were the affects on parenting: “Most forcibly removed children were denied the experience of being parented or at least cared for by a person to whom they were attached. This is the very experience people rely on to become effective and successful parents themselves.”4

These lasting impacts affect future generations as well. “Trauma can be transferred from the first generation of survivors that have experienced (or witnessed) it directly in the past to the second and further generations of descendants of the survivors.”5 This is referred to as intergenerational trauma and is particularly well-documented in post-war communities.

However, the national inquiry found that intergenerational trauma clearly affects the Stolen Generations as well: “The inquiry received evidence that unresolved grief and trauma are also inherited by subsequent generations. Parents ‘convey anxiety and distress’ to their children.”6

THE CURRENT SITUATION

Despite concerted efforts to reduce the number of indigenous children in out-of-home care over the past 20 years, the likelihood of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being removed from their families has increased since Bringing them home was released.

In 1997, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children accounted for 20 per cent of children living in out-of-home care. Twenty years later, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reports that indigenous children make up 35 per cent of children living in out-of-home care.7 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are also 10 times more likely to be placed in out-of-home care than non-indigenous children.8

Though every state and territory has adopted the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (a key recommendation of the report), in 2016 only 66 per cent of indigenous children were placed in out-of-home care in accordance with the principle.9

While there are undoubtedly circumstances where children need to be removed from their families, greater efforts are required to empower and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to break free from the cycle that brings them into contact with child protection authorities in the first place. This includes learning more about the intergenerational impact of past policies of removal on our children.

MOVING FORWARD: BRINGING THEM HOME 20 YEARS ON

In May 2017, on the 20th anniversary of the Bringing them home report, the Healing Foundation released Bringing Them Home 20 years on: an action plan for healing.

This report sets out a plan to help reduce the impact of trauma, with a focus on four key priorities:

- Conduct a comprehensive needs analysis to inform the delivery of more effective services for Stolen Generations members
- Establish a national scheme for reparations to ensure equal access to financial redress and culturally appropriate healing services
- Co-ordinate compulsory training around Stolen Generations trauma so that the organisations working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are better equipped to provide effective and appropriate services
- Initiate a comprehensive study of intergenerational trauma and how to tackle it.

FOOTNOTES

TRAUMA AFFECTS GENERATIONS AFTER BRINGING THEM HOME REPORT

Understanding the intergenerational impact of child removal is critical to addressing contemporary issues for ATSI people, according to this news story from the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Twenty years ago this week, the Australian Human Rights Commission tabled in Federal Parliament a report into the forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. Between one in three and one in ten indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families and communities between 1910 and 1970, the Bringing them home report found.

Those findings remain significant because many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families continue to experience trauma as a result of past state and territory government policies to remove children from their families.

The National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families informed the Bringing them home report. The inquiry heard from 500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as well as from indigenous organisations, foster parents, state and territory government representatives, church representatives and former mission employees.

The Bringing them home report, tabled in Parliament on 27 May 1997, includes 54 recommendations to support healing and reconciliation for the Stolen Generations, their families and the Australian public.

The family traumas reflected in that report continue to affect members of the Stolen Generation and their successors.

“Understanding the intergenerational impact of child removal is critical to addressing contemporary issues for our people,” said Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner June Oscar.

“The overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the out-of-home care system is directly related to the trauma experienced by the Stolen Generations.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are 9.5 times more likely than non-indigenous children to be in out-of-home care and the trend is accelerating.

“The out-of-home care system is often a fast track for our children and young people to enter into the justice system. We need to reverse this trend.

“We can do this by ensuring our people are mean-
ingfully engaged in decision-making, and by paying closer attention to the work being done by Aboriginal-controlled health organisations to make families safer and to keep families together.

“There is no doubt in my mind that we need to focus on adequate funding, prevention and accountability measures to support our families,” Commissioner Oscar said.

A new report released this week by the Healing Foundation outlines four priorities to achieve long-term change. Bringing Them Home, 20 years on, urges the federal government to:

- Conduct a comprehensive needs analysis to inform the delivery of more effective services for Stolen Generations members
- Establish a national scheme for reparations to ensure equal access to financial redress and culturally appropriate healing services,
- Co-ordinate compulsory training around Stolen Generations trauma so that the organisations working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are better equipped to provide effective and appropriate services.
- Initiate a comprehensive study of intergenerational trauma and how to tackle it.

In late 2017 (after this article was first published), the Australian Human Rights Commission launched an updated version of its Bringing them home schools resource, mapped to the Australian school curriculum. It can be found at: https://bth.humanrights.gov.au

AN ACTION PLAN FOR MAKING THINGS RIGHT

While we note that both federal and state governments over the past 20 years have made responses to the Bringing them home report, it has been neither adequate in resources nor in the commitment required to create real change.

The 20th anniversary of Bringing them home, in 2017, represents an important opportunity to revisit the continuing needs and rights of Stolen Generations members and their families, and to recommit to the original recommendations. Stolen Generations members are ageing, and there is an urgent need to ensure they, and their families, don’t face further trauma by a failure to achieve justice in their lifetime.

This review provides a set of actions to help Stolen Generations members reach some peace, and to meet their continuing and emerging needs, along with the future needs of their families.

- Action one – comprehensive response for Stolen Generations: Ensuring the holistic needs of the Stolen Generations are met, including dedicated needs-based funding and a universal, culturally safe and trauma-informed financial redress scheme.
- Action two – healing intergenerational trauma: Addressing the serious, widespread, and worsening effects of unresolved intergenerational trauma arising from the processes of colonisation and from the forcible removal of children, as the driver of many health, social and wellbeing issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples including the Stolen Generations, their families and descendants.
- Action three – creating an environment for change: Creating a policy response to the rights and needs of Stolen Generations members and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that is based on the principles underlying Bringing them home as a basis for reconciliation in Australia.

ACTION ONE: COMPREHENSIVE RESPONSE FOR STOLEN GENERATIONS

The Bringing them home report made a case for a comprehensive package of reparations to the Stolen Generations, including acknowledgment and apology, guarantees against repetition, restitution, rehabilitation and monetary compensation (financial redress). As documented above, such reparation has only been partly made.

1. Meeting the healing needs of the Stolen Generations

Assessing the level of need

There are an estimated 175,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are either Stolen Generations themselves or directly affected by the processes of forcible removal. Given the negative social, health and wellbeing effects of removal, this represents a substantial level of need within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. It may also be the case that the Stolen Generations are experiencing accumulating levels of disadvantage as new needs emerge or intensify, for example due to the fact that they are ageing, or as a result of the non-implementation of the Bringing them home recommendations.

A national needs assessment process is therefore required. This will document the contemporary experience of Stolen Generations members and their families, identify their existing and emerging needs, describe the appropriate service models to meet those needs and recommend funding reforms to support those services, including a dedicated needs-based Australian Government funding stream.20

Dedicated needs-based funding

The Bringing them home report recognised adequate resourcing as a key principle to underpin government responses to the Stolen Generations. However, the Australian Government’s response to Bringing them home has not maintained a focus on their specific needs and no dedicated funding stream has provided services to them.
Stolen Generations and their families for healing. This has included a pool of funding that can be accessed for collective healing initiatives that include memorials, healing centres, healing camps and groups, and reunions of institutions. This is enabling Stolen Generations and their families to access healing that is meaningful to them and chosen by them—thereby implementing one of the key principles of the Bringing them home report, self-determination.

Developing a trauma-informed public policy environment

Appropriate support for Stolen Generations members and their descendants cannot be provided without a good understanding of the historical and living trauma that they are experiencing.

Inadequate education about this history is impairing the ability of governments, service providers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to effectively meet their needs. While trauma limits the ability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to engage confidently with mainstream health and welfare services.

Existing training does not support police, welfare services, health and mental health providers and institutions such as aged care facilities to respond effectively to the increasing distress Stolen Generations and their descendants might experience by coming into contact with these services, often agents of harm from their past.

In addition, trauma informed training that is currently available does not cover the trauma experienced by our Stolen Generations members and their families, and often does not come from a cultural perspective.

The development of a suite of trauma training packages that are designed with Stolen Generations survivors would ensure governments, professionals and services are learning the skills and the means to respond effectively to Stolen Generations survivors without causing more harm.

Trauma-informed organisations use a strengths-based approach based on an understanding of the impact of trauma; emphasise the physical, psychological, and emotional safety of clients and staff; and help people affected by trauma to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.21

2. Supporting healing approaches

Since the Bringing them home report was tabled two decades ago, considerable knowledge about healing approaches for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has been developed. Evidence shows that such approaches can lead to improved resilience, mental health, and reduced risk of disease. The creation of healing centres in Canada, in response to the inter-generational impacts of child removal practices there, has led to significant reductions in socially damaging problems including suicide.22

The Canadian Healing Foundation was provided over $800 million to lead their healing responses and this

**DOREEN WEBSTER**

Doreen Webster is a Barkindji woman, born in Wilcannia, in the north west of New South Wales.

“I remember happy times with my parents before I was taken. My dad worked on a station. I loved it. I had a younger sister. She was a baby when she was taken.”

Doreen and her brother John were taken to the local police station and locked up in a cell. The next day she was put on a train to Sydney, where at Central Station, Doreen was separated from her brother.

“A man was waiting there for my brother from Kinchela Boys Home. I said ‘Where are you going?’ And I was pulling at him, trying to pull him back,” she said. “Here I am on the station, a little eight year old, screaming and crying because they were taking my brother away.”

Doreen was taken to the Cootamundra Domestic Training Home for Aboriginal Girls.

“When I got up to Cootamundra I was thinking, ‘What’s going on here? Where am I?’ I had no idea where I was or what was happening to me. I was screaming for my mum and dad. When we got there we were treated so cruel – so cruelly,” Doreen said. She recalls the matron asking a police office to punish her.

“I was sitting down on the ground and he got me by the hair of the head and just pulled me up, straight up to my feet – lifted me off the ground and stood me on my feet – and then he stood on my foot. I had no shoes on. I was screaming out in agony. It was just horrifying. I used to run away all the time,” she said.

Doreen is now a vocal advocate of appropriate aged care for the Stolen Generations. On the 20th anniversary of the ‘Bringing them home’ report, she wants the survivors of Cootamundra, and the infamous Kinchela Boys Home, to have their own joint aged care facility, so they can spend their last years together.

“For when we get older, a place where we can be. We are family, we are sisters to the Kinchela boys. They are brothers to us. And there is a closeness. That is our family.”

The Bringing them home counsellor positions originally funded in 1997 are now expected to provide general social and emotional wellbeing services for the whole Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

The lack of focus on the specific needs of Stolen Generations members and their families is exacerbated by the large amount of funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and social support services now being funnelled by the Australian Government’s Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) to non-indigenous NGOs, and in some cases to church-run organisations. This is creating barriers for Stolen Generations members and their descendants to access services because in a number of cases the services are provided by the same churches who ran the institutions where the children were forcibly removed and traumatised.

Consideration should be given to funding for community-healing responses to assist Stolen Generations members create renewed connections to the places they are now living. This could take the form of healing forums that the Healing Foundation has been leading throughout the country. These forums are enabling communities to reflect on the negative impact of colonisation and to create solutions that bring harmony and balance back to community relationships.

For example, funding that has been provided both under the New South Wales and South Australian compensation schemes has allowed for direct funding to...
allowed significant effort across the country to achieve these outcomes. They also did this work within the context of a treaty that politically supported funding and progressive policy initiatives that enabled self-determination for Aboriginal communities.

Healing approaches are diverse, responding to the particular needs of the communities in which they are embedded. However they generally aim to build individual, family and community capacity through western methodologies and traditional healing. Continuing and expanding support for healing approaches, and sharing the theory and evidence for their effectiveness, is important to address the traumatic legacy of the forcible removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families.

Healing centres are an important new approach for Stolen Generations members and their descendants. For many of our Stolen Generations who have nowhere to call home they are creating a place of healing and renewal and helping to support members to have a culturally safe place to seek sanctuary and support.

An example of this is the healing centre at Kinchela. Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation was established by the survivors of Kinchela Aboriginal Boys Training Home, a ‘home’ run by the NSW Government for over 50 years.

Led by survivors and their families, the Corporation encourages and supports sustainable healing programs that address the legacy of physical, sexual, psychological and cultural abuse experienced by the survivors as well as the intergenerational trauma experienced by their descendants.

Currently the Corporation is developing concepts and plans for a museum on the site of the home and a healing centre at South West Rocks, a place where the boys felt safe during their time at Kinchela.

The concept for the healing centre includes governance structures and government training, program design, management and evaluation for programs to be run at the centre. This would also include the archiving of cultural knowledge and materials to preserve historical records, including oral histories.

Kinchela Boys Home inflicted significant pain on survivors, their families and communities, and they need a safe place where they can gather and support each other as a fundamental part of the healing process. The healing centre will provide a retreat for the community, a safe place to participate in reunions and workshops, and offer ways to reconnect families and reclaim cultural heritage.

3. Ensuring Stolen Generations have a voice in service delivery

Over time, the focus of the Australian Government’s Bringing them home counselling funding provided in response to the report has shifted away from the specific needs of the Stolen Generations towards the social and emotional wellbeing needs of the wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

IAN HAMM

Ian Hamm is a Yorta Yorta man from Shepparton in central Victoria. In 1964, he was separated from his family when he was three weeks old. He grew up just 50 kilometres away from them, unaware of their existence.

That changed when he went to college and met an Aboriginal education officer who asked him if he knew where he came from. Ian replied his birth name was Andrew James. The person said: “Yeah. I think I know who you are. I’ll get back to you.” Six months later a worker from the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency visited Ian in Bendigo. She told him his birth family, the James family, was a big Aboriginal family in Shepparton. Ian then realised he’d already met some of his birth family, but was unaware of their relationship.

“It blows you away. She told me I was one of five, you have two sisters and two brothers.” I asked about my mother. She said my mother died in 1966, when I was two,” he said.

“I’ve only got a few photos of my mum. It’s enormously frustrating when people say to me I’m like my mother. I don’t know what that means. It puts into perspective where you fit in. Or don’t fit in as the case may be,” he said. “The hard part of this is I didn’t meet any of them until I was in my twenties. You’ve only known each other as adults,” Ian said.

“It will be the same for anybody who’s been through this experience, the thing that’s the most confronting, the one that you live with every day. That you’ve had to start a relationship as an adult. How do you create those relationships? How do you make them work?” He described the uncertainty of identity he felt as the only Aboriginal man growing up in Yarrawonga.

“People would tell me I’m Aboriginal but what does that mean? My only source of information was what people told me and what I saw on television. This is the ’60s and the ’70s, and that wasn’t great.” Over the years, moving forward has had its own challenges, especially in finding a way of getting on with things. “When I say heal, for me, I don’t think you get over it, you just get used to it. It’s how I get by.”

“It will be the same for anybody who’s been through this experience, the thing that’s the most confronting, the one that you live with every day. That you’ve had to start a relationship as an adult. How do you create those relationships? How do you make them work?” He described the uncertainty of identity he felt as the only Aboriginal man growing up in Yarrawonga.

There are days when sometimes it just gets to me. I get this overwhelming sense of sadness. And I know exactly what it is. It’s that ‘where do I fit in.’”

The recent transfer of funding to the Indigenous Advancement Strategy has contributed to this process. States and territories also need to investigate their responses and ensure they are in line with supporting Stolen Generations to have self-determination within healing processes that are funded and supported.

As well as a dedicated funding stream for Stolen Generations organisations, formal governance mechanisms are required for organisations with Stolen Generations clients to ensure that Stolen Generations members have input into the design and delivery of their services. This will assist organisations to meet the specific service needs of Stolen Generations and their families.

For example, organisations that provide services for Stolen Generations, that are not specific Stolen Generations-led organisations, can establish mechanisms such as reference groups to ensure that Stolen Generations members’ service needs are adequately met.

4. Reporting on the needs of the Stolen Generations

Currently, many government reporting processes do not specifically include sections on the Stolen Generations.
The specific needs of the Stolen Generations should be included in key government reports and strategies to maintain a national focus on their needs and how these are being met over time.

5. Access to records
The Bringing them home report looked specifically at access to individual and family records of the Stolen Generations as a vital part of assisting in the process of locating and reuniting families. Despite the Australian Government’s response to Bringing them home prioritising family reunion, problems accessing records have persisted. A review of access to records at all levels of government, including states and territories, and non-government agencies is needed and the implementation of the report’s recommendations is required.

6. Education
The Bringing them home report identified education as an important part of the reparation process; with awareness of the history of child removal key to preventing the repetition of such human rights violations. Despite some progress, for example the inclusion of information about the Stolen Generations in the national curriculum, 83 per cent of Australians believe it is important to know more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.

Education about the history of the Stolen Generations therefore remains important, starting with early learning centres and schools, continuing up to professional training of those who may work with, or make decisions affecting, Stolen Generations members and their families. The Healing Foundation has been working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander curriculum writers to develop classroom resources for K-9. This has been supported by a number of peak bodies who have recommended that all state education departments support further development of these learning tools. State and territory education departments can show leadership by ensuring that these resources are used by teachers throughout their education systems.

7. Financial redress
The Bringing them home report made monetary compensation a central component of reparation for Stolen Generations members and their families. It is not the intent of this report to say who is responsible for providing monetary compensation, but it must be addressed by all levels of government across the country.

A universal, safe and culturally appropriate scheme for financial redress is justified as acknowledgement of past wrongs; as reparation for health and social disadvantage resulting from removal; as financial assistance given the lifelong socioeconomic effects of forcible removal; and as acknowledgement that native title and land rights schemes have not significantly advantaged the Stolen Generations due to their removal from family and country.

Despite the Bringing them home recommendations and a later Senate Inquiry recommending the establishment of a reparations tribunal to address the provision of monetary compensation – the Australian Government has consistently refused to establish a national scheme, arguing that responsibility for compensation lies with the institutions involved and/or state and territory governments. The lack of a national process for compensation means that the adversarial court system remains the only avenue for most Stolen Generations members to seek financial compensation for the wrongs done to them.

The current Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has recommended the establishment of a redress scheme for all those who have been sexually abused while in institutional care. The Australian Government has in this case recognised the importance of a nationally consistent process for reparation including monetary compensation, and has agreed to lead the development of such an approach. This provides an important opportunity to advocate for the Australian Government to adopt a similar responsibility in relation to redress for the Stolen Generations. As acknowledged in the Bringing them home report itself, reparation processes need to minimise the risk of re-traumatising people who are applying for financial redress.

There is also a lot of distress from some Stolen Generations members that if they die before any compensation becomes available their families may miss out. To date, no nationally implemented redress scheme has addressed this issue and most have explicitly stated they will not provide compensation to deceased descendants. While this is probably considered complex, a policy should be developed to address this and could be part of the national needs assessment. Failure to address it is causing ongoing trauma in these families, as they feel their family member is forgotten and their pain overlooked.

ACTION TWO: HEALING INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA
1. A national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trauma strategy
Given the widespread, serious effects of unresolved intergenerational trauma, a national strategy on addressing intergenerational trauma is needed. Such a strategy should link to existing national strategies, in particular the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children and the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children.

A national strategy to address trauma and appropriately resource healing would acknowledge and respect the cultural knowledge and expertise of Stolen Generations members and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and endorse the principles underpinning the Bringing them home report. Such a strategy would:

- Address the challenges of building Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce capability within and across diverse organisations, communities and locations
- Support the funding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait...
Michael Welsh is a Wailwan man from Coonamble in New South Wales. He was eight when he and his brother Barry were taken from his mother and five of his siblings.

Michael was told that his other brothers and sisters would follow on the next train. He knew it was a lie. He was taken to the notorious Kinchela Aboriginal Boys Training Home. An institution near Kempsey on the New South Wales mid-north coast, Kinchela was renowned for its physical, sexual, psychological and cultural abuse of aboriginal children.

The children weren’t allowed to use names. Instead they were given numbers. Michael was number 36. Michael said the aim of Kinchela was “to degrade us and set us up for reprogramming our brains”.

For decades afterwards, Michael struggled with the trauma he experienced at Kinchela. He finally reached a stage where he couldn’t hold the pain back any longer. He made contact with the Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation (KBHAC), an organisation established by Kinchela survivors to support them and their descendants.

“When we get together as a group of brothers who’ve gone through that place, it feels good. The fear that was there is not there anymore,” Michael said.

Michael is passionate about ending the cycle of intergenerational trauma in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

“I’m not the only one who feels this pain, I’ve got eight children and they all feel the same,” he said.

“We do not want this hate to go to our children or to our grandchildren and great grandchildren.”

“Our children need to be connected to this healing process too. Our journey’s almost over, our children’s journeys are only just beginning.”

2. Addressing contemporary child removal

The original inquiry was asked to look at the legacy of removal through examining the contemporary removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. Today’s removal of children and the processes related to removal are different to the experience of the Stolen Generations who had no legislation, rights or ability to make complaint about what occurred to them. The effects in perpetuating intergenerational trauma and undermining the identity of children are similar.

This is particularly true for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who are removed from their families and placed in environments that do not support their identity. Despite the fact that all Australian jurisdictions have now adopted the Indigenous Child Placement Principles in legislation (as recommended by the Bringing them home report), only two-thirds (66 per cent) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children removed from their families are placed in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander environments. In some jurisdictions it is much less.27

Addressing the rising numbers of children being removed from their families, and the limited application of the Indigenous Child Placement Principles is complex, but a vital part of bringing the cycle of intergenerational trauma to an end. This may include the setting of targets for the reduction of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being removed from their families to be included in the ‘Close the Gap’ measures.

However, it should be noted that many states and territories are making gains in this area. For example, Queensland is implementing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led family and child wellbeing centres across the state to ensure holistic supports for families within a culturally safe, trauma informed model. These models are being designed, developed and implemented by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations across the state.

Victoria has started implementing the transfer of guardianship of Aboriginal children in care to Aboriginal agencies. This means for the first time Aboriginal people will be in charge of making the decisions over the future of their own children without ongoing state intervention. Meanwhile, New South Wales has begun the transfer of all children in out of home care from non-indigenous NGO’s to Aboriginal-run agencies across the state. This has a training and development plan attached to support the development of Aboriginal agencies and their success. These are promising examples of change occurring but they need sustained implementation over time. Long-term vision and commitment to these initiatives, along with bi-partisan support, is needed to create the scale and impact that is required to reduce the growing numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care.

3. Adequate mental health, social and emotional wellbeing funding

The Report of the National Review of Mental Health Programs and Services found numerous barriers to social and emotional wellbeing and mental health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including a lack of a clear funding processes for preferred community controlled, culturally capable models of care.28 Secure and dedicated funding for such mental health and social and emotional wellbeing services for the wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is therefore critical, in recognition of the widespread social and emotional wellbeing and mental health issues prevalent in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the inappropriate nature of many mainstream service responses.
4. Describing the intergenerational experience of trauma

There is a lack of research about how the specific experiences of Stolen Generations members relate to general descriptions of trauma as experienced by survivors of other human rights abuses such as forced adoption, torture, or genocide. Research is needed to establish the specific effects of intergenerational trauma amongst the Stolen Generations. Such research needs to involve, at all stages, Stolen Generations members and their families.

ACTION THREE: CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT FOR CHANGE

The Bringing them home report called for a coherent policy response to the needs of the Stolen Generations and the wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The recent Senate Inquiry into the Indigenous Advancement Strategy found, current policy and funding processes are marked by a lack of consultation, rushed processes with poor transparency, significant administrative challenges for community organisations, uncertainty for providers, and gaps in service delivery. Such findings are strongly supported by almost universal experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations working to ‘close the gap’.

1. A return to underlying principles

The Bringing them home report recognised that: The history we have documented has had a profound impact on every aspect of the lives of Indigenous communities. An adequate response to this history and its effects will challenge the sensitivity, the goodwill and the creativity of all governments. It requires a whole-of-government policy response with immediate targets, long-term objectives and a continuing commitment.

This is a challenge that Australian governments have not yet met, despite some successes such as the delivery of apologies from all governments.

Any meaningful government response to the rights and needs of the Stolen Generations must return to and be explicitly based on the principles that underpinned the Bringing them home report: self-determination, non-discrimination, cultural renewal, a coherent policy base and adequate resources.

The principles outlined in the original report were from international human rights agreements to which Australia is a signatory. This includes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Since 1997, additional weight has been given to these principles by Australia’s ratification of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) which contains several articles of specific relevance to the Stolen Generations including Article 8 (the right of Indigenous Peoples not to be subjected to forced assimilation, and to have access to redress where such actions occur) and Article 19 (the right of Indigenous Peoples to be consulted and to consent before the adoption of legislation or policies affecting them).

2. Truth, healing and reconciliation

The Bringing them home report was founded on the knowledge that true reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-indigenous Australians depended on a truthful examination of a painful and unjust past.

In this way, although it did not use the term itself, the inquiry operated as a ‘truth commission’, one of many set up around the world from the 1980s onwards to investigate and come to terms with nations’ past human rights violations. While government responses to such truth commissions have frequently been disappointing, they nevertheless have had positive effects, for example through the mobilisation of political demands around their recommendations; through a continued struggle for accountability and reparations; and through becoming a focal point for national conversations about history, power and justice.

Consistent with this international experience, and despite the poor government record of implementation, Bringing them home has been a major and lasting achievement. Almost 20 years on, implementation of the report’s recommendations remains a crucial step on the path to genuine reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australia. In recommending a new and more comprehensive Australian Government response...
to the Bringing them home report, Reconciliation Australia found that:

*Australia’s lack of historical acceptance is a potential barrier to reconciliation. Until we accept our past, make amends for injustices and pledge to ensure that these wrongs are never repeated, Australia will not achieve true reconciliation... There is a continued perception by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that past wrongs have not been righted. This is a major barrier to reconciliation. The data supports this perception and shows that efforts to repair past wrongs have been slow, piecemeal, largely ignored, or are getting worse.*

The 20th anniversary of the release of the Bringing them home report in 2017 represents an important opportunity to revisit the continuing rights and needs of the Stolen Generations, and to recommit to the implementation of the recommendations made in 1997 as a basis for true reconciliation in Australia.

3. Monitoring and accountability

The Australian Government rejected the model for monitoring the implementation of its recommendations made by the Bringing them home report. No sustained system was ever put in place. This has undoubtedly contributed to the poor record of implementation of the report’s recommendations. This goes beyond the Bringing them home report with the non-implementation of key inquiry recommendations a dominant theme over many years:

*In the past 25 years – a generation in fact – we have had the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, the Bringing them home report and Reconciliation: Australia’s Challenge: the final report of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. These reports, and numerous other Coroner and Social Justice Reports, have made over 400 recommendations, most of which have either been partially implemented for short term periods or ignored altogether.*

This would suggest a national dialogue is needed on creating sustainable structures to monitor the implementation of recommendations from systemic inquiries into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage, including the recommendations of the Bringing them home report.

**NOTES**

20. The needs assessment could also provide an updated estimate of the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who were either forcibly removed, or directly affected by the forcible removal of a family member, using the 2014 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) and figures from the 2016 Census which are not publicly available at the time of writing.


34. Reconciliation Australia (2016). The State of Reconciliation in Australia, Reconciliation Australia.

35. Ibid. page 5.
‘Unfinished business’ of Stolen Generations puts more children at risk – report

Calla Wahlquist from The Guardian reports on a call for action on the 54 Bringing them home recommendations, most of which have either not been adopted or have only been partly implemented.

The failure to implement the recommendations of the Bringing them home report has prolonged the social burden of trauma caused by forced child removals and potentially exposed another generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to harm, a new study has said.

Launched ahead of Friday’s 20th anniversary of the report, the study by the Healing Foundation will be presented to the prime minister, Malcolm Turnbull, at a breakfast in Canberra on Tuesday.

It argues that the 54 recommendations of the Bringing them home report, most of which have either not been implemented or have only been partially implemented, remained “unfinished business”.

“There is no way of knowing what the contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander world would look like had there been a concerted effort to implement the Bringing them home vision for the future,” the report said.

“But it is clear that the failure to properly implement this vision represents a significantly missed opportunity to address trauma in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and to provide a basis for genuine reconciliation in Australia.”

The report calls for research into intergenerational trauma, an increase in direct funding toward indigenous-run healing centres and programs designed explicitly for members of the Stolen Generation, and immediate action to introduce a compensation scheme for Stolen Generation members.

A compensation scheme was one of the key recommendations of the Bringing them home report and was also recommended by a Senate inquiry in 2000. But the federal government has deflected responsibility for compensation to the churches, and state government welfare agencies directly involved in child removal.

At least 15,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander...
LASTING TRAUMA AND CHILD REMOVAL

- Two decades ago (1997), the landmark Bringing them home report was tabled in federal parliament, exposing the extent of forced child removals.
- The forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children primarily happened between 1905 and 1969.
- However, key recommendations from the national inquiry have not been implemented and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children now make up a larger part of the out-of-home care system.
- Indigenous children are around nine times more likely to be removed by authorities compared to their non-indigenous peers.
- In May 1997, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander young people made up about 20 per cent of the child protection system. Today, it is closer to one in three.
- Around 15,000 indigenous children are currently in state care.
- A Senate inquiry examining out-of-home care made 39 recommendations in August 2015. Some findings related specifically to indigenous communities and services; nearly two years on, the federal government has not formally replied.
- Unresolved trauma amongst the Stolen Generations continues to be passed on to their children and grandchildren, increasing the incidence of crime, ill health and social disadvantage.


The report calls for research into intergenerational trauma, an increase in direct funding toward indigenous-run healing centres and programs designed explicitly for members of the Stolen Generation, and immediate action to introduce a compensation scheme for Stolen Generation members.

children – an estimated one in 10 indigenous children – were taken from their families under assimilationist government policies that were not repealed until the 1970s. A further 150,000 were directly affected by the policy by losing their child or sibling, or growing up with a parent struggling with the unresolved trauma of being taken away.

The Bringing them home report found the forced removal was “an act of genocide” and set out a list of reparations, starting with a formal apology which was delivered by then prime minister Kevin Rudd in 2008.

The chairman of the Healing Foundation, Prof Steve Larkin, said there appeared to be a belief that the apology alone would be enough to help members of the Stolen Generation heal.

“Just acknowledging that those acts occurred doesn’t mean that people heal immediately, they require a lot of intensive support and services over time to heal,” he said in an interview with Guardian Australia.

Larkin, a Kungarakan man, said the continued over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care, while not borne out of the same explicitly racist policies, could not be isolated from the impacts of intergenerational trauma caused by forced removal.

“If you’ve got that very distressed, traumatised view of the world, then those sorts of things get passed on to children about how they have to understand and navigate the world,” he said.

“A distrust of institutions, a distrust of authority, low self-belief, low self-confidence, low self-esteem ... inevitably what we’re seeing is those things pass from Stolen Generation members to their children to their grandchildren.

“Stolen Generation members are adamant and desperate to disrupt that cycle. They don’t want that to happen for their children.”


New report shows long-term disadvantage for Australia’s Stolen Generations

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were removed from their families, during practices that led to the Stolen Generations, experience significant health and social disadvantage, according to a report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in partnership with The Healing Foundation.

The report, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations and descendants: Numbers, demographic characteristics and selected outcomes*, shows that, compared to Indigenous Australians who were not removed from their families, members of the Stolen Generations experience poorer outcomes across a range of measures.

This report analyses data from a series of surveys conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and finds that among all Indigenous people born before 1972 (when forced removal policies were abandoned) around 1 in 10, or 11%, reported being removed from their families. This leads to an estimate that about 17,000 members of the Stolen Generations are still alive in 2018.

Over half (56%) are female, and the majority (79%) live in non-remote areas. Most live in New South Wales (30%), Western Australia (22%) and Queensland (21%). Two-thirds are aged 50 and over, while 20% are over 65.

“The data shows poorer health and social outcomes among this group of Indigenous Australians compared to those who were not removed from their families,” said AIHW spokesperson Dr Fadwa Al-Yaman.

“For example, indigenous people who were removed from their families are more than 3 times as likely to have been incarcerated in the last 5 years, and 1.8 times as likely to rely on government payments as their main source of income and 1.7 times as likely to experience violence compared to those who were not removed.”

They are also more likely to have experienced discrimination, be unemployed or not own a home, and less likely to report good general health.

The Healing Foundation Board Chair Professor Steve Larkin welcomed the report’s release as the first detailed study of its kind and noted the importance of the report in establishing the intergenerational impacts of removal from family.

“The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report has filled in a lot of gaps and importantly, uncovered a very concerning level of health, social and economic disadvantage across generations,” he said.

“Today’s report is significant in showing that the negative effects of past practices are not limited to those directly removed, with descendants also consistently experiencing poorer health and social outcomes than other Indigenous Australians.”

In 2014-15, close to 115,000 Indigenous Australians aged 18 and over were descended from relatives in older generations who had been removed from their families. This includes around 15,000 who were also removed themselves from their families as children.

The descendants were twice as likely to report they felt discriminated against in the last 12 months, twice as likely not to speak an Indigenous language, and 1.9 times more likely to have experienced violence, compared with a reference group of Indigenous people aged 18 and over who had not experienced any kind of removal from family.

Professor Larkin said the data clearly demonstrates the urgency in addressing the unique needs of the Stolen Generations and tackling intergenerational trauma as the underlying cause of many social and health problems faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities today.

“Before this report, we didn’t know how many Stolen Generations members were still alive, or the full impact of ongoing trauma in people’s lives, which made it difficult to determine needs and...”

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Stolen Generations and the Way Ahead
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations and descendants: Numbers, demographic characteristics and selected outcomes

This overview outlines key findings from the analyses of the estimated numbers and demographic characteristics of proxy measures of the Stolen Generations and the descendants of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people removed from their families. It also covers the key findings from examining the relationship between being removed, and being a descendant, regarding 38 outcomes that cover health status, health risk factors, cultural factors and socioeconomic indicators for the most recent data, as well as changes over time. In this component of the analysis, the Stolen Generations proxy population was compared with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the same age cohort who were not removed. In addition, the descendants of all people removed were compared with indigenous people who had not experienced any type of removal. Comparisons with non-indigenous Australians were also carried out for a smaller set of outcomes.

Key findings

Using data from five Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) surveys of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population (undertaken from 2002 to 2014-15), it is possible to identify individuals who were born before 1972 and who reported being removed from their families. This subgroup is used as a proxy measure for the Stolen Generations. The ABS surveys can also be used to identify the descendants of all people removed from their families, which include descendants of the Stolen Generations.

Based on data from the 2014-15 survey:

- 20,900 individuals born before 1972 were estimated to be the surviving members among those who had been removed from their families.
- A slightly higher proportion of them were women (56%) than men (44%), and the majority (79%) lived in non-remote areas.
- 29% of those who were removed in this age cohort reported living alone, 66% were aged 50 and over, and 20% were aged 65 and over.

The time series data suggest that, on average, 11% of people in the cohort born before 1972 report being removed from their families.

- When this proportion is applied to population data for 2018 (among those aged 46 and over), the resulting estimate is that in 2018, around 17,150 people in the cohort born before 1972 are the surviving members among those who had been removed from their families (the Stolen Generations proxy population).

The Stolen Generations proxy population experienced a range of adverse health, cultural and socioeconomic outcomes at a rate higher than the indigenous population that had not been removed.

- Key findings among these differences are a higher likelihood of: being incarcerated in the last five years (3.3 times), being formally charged by police in their lifetime (2.2 times), having government payments as their main income source (1.8 times), not being a home owner (1.7 times) and being more likely to have poor general health based on a composite measure (1.6 times).

This report also estimated the size of the population of descendants of all people removed in the past. The descendants are defined as people aged 18 and over at the time of the ABS survey who reported having elder relatives (great/grandparents, parents, or uncles and aunts) removed.

- In 2014-15, the estimated number of descendants aged 18 and over was around 114,800; this includes around 15,400 individuals who reported that they themselves were also removed from their families.
- The proportion of the population identified as descendants remained stable across the five ABS surveys – around 33% of the population aged 18 and over.

The descendants were also consistently more likely to have experienced adverse outcomes over a broad range of health, socioeconomic and cultural indicators, compared with a reference group of indigenous people aged 18 and over who reported neither being removed themselves from their own families, nor having any relatives removed.

- Key findings among these differences are a higher likelihood of: feeling discriminated against in the last 12 months (2 times), experiencing actual or threatened physical violence (1.9 times), having poor general health based on a composite measure (1.6 times), and having been arrested in the last five years (1.5 times).

Large differences are also seen between the Stolen Generations proxy population born before 1972 and a comparable non-indigenous reference group, as well as between the descendants aged 18 and over and their comparable non-indigenous reference group.


Through this data, we’ve been able to compare health and social outcomes for members of the Stolen Generations and their descendants to effectively show the “gap within the gap”, he said.

Professor Larkin said that the data will help determine future priorities for the Stolen Generations, and assist policymakers and service delivery agencies better meet the complex needs of this group of Indigenous Australians.

CHILD PROTECTION AND ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN

This Australian Institute of Family Studies paper provides information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children involved in child protection and out-of-home care, and is based on data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare’s Child Protection 2015-16 (AIHW 2017a; 2017b).

Child protection statistics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are over-represented in child protection and out-of-home care services compared to non-indigenous children. The reasons for this are complex and are connected to past policies and the legacy of colonisation. Poverty, assimilation policies, intergenerational trauma and discrimination and forced child removals have all contributed to the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care, as have cultural differences in child-rearing practices and family structure (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission [HREOC], 1997; SNAICC, 2016a; Titterton, 2017).

Child protection authorities are required to intervene if a child has been, is being or is at risk of significant harm. Between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2016, the rate of substantiations of abuse, neglect or risk of harm was 43.6 per 1,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Australia. This means that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were almost seven times more likely than non-indigenous children to be the subject of substantiated reports of harm/risk of harm (see Table 1). In the Northern Territory, where rates of notifications have more than doubled since 2011, a Royal Commission into the protection and detention of children is currently underway.

Table 1: The number of children aged 0-17 years who were the subject of substantiated reports of harm or risk of harm, rates per 1,000 children by indigenous status 2015-16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/territory</th>
<th>Indigenous (per 1,000 children)</th>
<th>Non-indigenous (per 1,000 children)</th>
<th>All children (per 1,000 children)</th>
<th>Rate ratio indigenous/non-indigenous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>57.2</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vic</td>
<td>80.2</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tas</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>49.6</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), 2017a, Table 3.5, p.28.

Do child protection data tell us how many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have been abused or neglected?

Child protection data tell us how many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children come into contact with child protection services. These data are not a measure of the actual prevalence of child abuse and neglect experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, as there are several problems with these data that result in some children who:

- Have been abused or neglected not being included in child protection statistics; and
- Have not been abused or neglected not being included in child protection statistics.

See Bromfield and Higgins (2004) for a detailed discussion.

In addition to these known problems with child protection data, there are several issues that contribute to the under-reporting of violence, neglect and child abuse in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

These include:

- Fear, mistrust and loss of confidence in the police, justice system, government agencies and the media, including a belief that perpetrators of sexual or family violence will not be punished (Aboriginal Child Sexual Assault Taskforce, 2006; Anderson & Wild, 2007; Bailey, Powell, & Brubacher, 2017; Prentice, Blair, & O’Mullan, 2017; Willis, 2011);
- Fear of racism (Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, 2013);
- Fear that the child may be removed from the community (Anderson & Wild, 2007; Taylor & Putt, 2007; Titterton, 2017);
- Community silence and denial (Gordon Hallahan, & Henry, 2002);
- Social and cultural pressure from other members of the family or community not to report abuse or violence, the belief that reporting is a betrayal of the culture and community, and the fear of being shunned by the community (Aboriginal Child Sexual Assault Taskforce, 2006; Prentice et al., 2017; Taylor & Putt, 2007);
- A belief in the need to protect the perpetrator because of the high number of indigenous deaths in custody (Stanley, Tomison, & Pocock, 2003);
- Fear of repercussions or retaliation from the perpetrator or their family (Stanley et al., 2003; Willis, 2011);
- Personal and cultural factors of shame, guilt and fear (Aboriginal Child Sexual Assault Taskforce, 2006; Anderson & Wild, 2007; Prentice et al., 2017; Taylor & Putt, 2007);
- Lack of understanding about what family violence and child abuse and neglect are generally, and...
Poverty, assimilation policies, intergenerational trauma and discrimination and forced child removals have all contributed to the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care, as have cultural differences in childrearing practices and family structure.

lack of understanding about what constitutes family violence and child sexual abuse specifically (Aboriginal Child Sexual Assault Taskforce, 2006; Anderson & Wild, 2007; Prentice et al., 2017);
• High levels of violence and the subsequent normalisation of family violence (Prentice et al., 2017; Willis, 2011);
• Lack of culturally appropriate services (Prentice et al., 2017);
• Language and communication barriers, lack of knowledge about legal rights and the services available, and lack of services for victims of child sexual abuse (Anderson & Wild, 2007); and
• Geographical isolation (i.e., nobody to report to, no means of reporting and minimal contact with child welfare professionals) (Gordon et al., 2002; New South Wales Ombudsman, 2012; Stanley et al., 2003).

In addition to the above, if the child is not correctly identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child protection data may be unreliable.

What are the most common types of abuse and neglect?
In 2015-16, harm or risk of harm from child abuse or neglect was substantiated or confirmed by statutory child protection services for 12,903 indigenous children aged 0-17 years across Australia.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of these substantiations over the four different primary types of maltreatment (physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect) and compares this distribution to substantiations involving non-indigenous children.

Child neglect and emotional abuse were the most frequent primary types of maltreatment experienced by indigenous children. Neglect refers to the failure (usually by the parent) to provide for a child’s basic needs, including failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, supervision, hygiene or medical attention. Emotional abuse refers to any act by a parent or carer that results in a child under their care suffering any kind of significant emotional deprivation or trauma (AIHW, 2017a).

The high rates of neglect are consistent with the disadvantaged socio-economic conditions prevalent in many indigenous communities, such as overcrowding, unemployment and limited access to services (Steering Committee for Review of Government Service Provision, 2014).

How does child maltreatment differ between indigenous and non-indigenous children?
The actual prevalence of child abuse and neglect of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is not known; however, child protection data show a consistent pattern of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being substantially over-represented in every area of the child protection system (AIHW, 2017a, 2017b). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are more likely than others in the community to experience problems commonly associated with child abuse and neglect (e.g., alcohol abuse and domestic violence) (Scott & Higgins, 2011).

Several prominent inquiries conducted in Australia over the last two decades have highlighted concerns that children in some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are at high risk of experiencing abuse and neglect (Anderson & Wild, 2007; Atkinson, 1990; Gordon et al., 2002; Memmott, Stacy, Chambers, & Keys, 2001; Northern Territory Government, 2010; Robertson, 2000).

In addition to the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system, there are differences between the primary types of maltreatment experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and non-indigenous children, as shown in Figure 1.

A greater number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (36.1%) were the subject of substantiations of neglect when compared with non-indigenous children (20.3%). Emotional abuse is the most commonly substantiated type of maltreatment for both non-indigenous children (46.7%) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (39.2%). For both groups of children, physical abuse (16.0% for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and 19.1% in non-indigenous children) and sexual abuse (8.4% for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and 13.7% for non-indigenous children) are the least common forms of substantiated harm.
These figures are likely to underestimate the actual prevalence of child sexual abuse (Mathews et al., 2016). Additionally, many children are victims of more than one type of harm and these data only represent the primary type of substantiated harm.

**Child sexual abuse in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities**

It has been estimated that less than 30% of all sexual assaults on children are reported and that the reporting rate is even lower for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (Bailey et al., 2017; Stanley et al., 2003). Inquiries into child sexual abuse in Western Australia, New South Wales and the Northern Territory have concluded that the sexual abuse of indigenous children was common, widespread and significantly under-reported (Aboriginal Child Sexual Assault Taskforce, 2006; Anderson & Wild, 2007; Gordon et al., 2002). Robertson (2000) estimated that up to 88% of all sexual assaults in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities go unreported (see also Willis, 2011 for more information on non-disclosure of violence in Australian indigenous communities).

In contrast to the low rates of sexual abuse substantiated by child protection services, police data on reported victims of sexual assault show that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are at greater risk than non-indigenous children of being sexually abused (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, 2014).¹

Health data regarding sexually transmitted infections (STIs), which have been associated with child sexual abuse, showed that over twice the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were diagnosed with an STI compared with non-indigenous children (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, 2014).²

Recorded victim statistics suggest that girls are more likely to be a victim of sexual abuse than boys (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, 2014). However, inquiries in the Northern Territory and New South Wales present evidence to suggest that there is widespread sexual abuse of boys in some communities (Aboriginal Child Sexual Assault Taskforce, 2006; Anderson & Wild, 2007).

Despite the low rates of child sexual abuse substantiated by child protection services, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys and girls are at greater risk of being sexually abused than non-indigenous children. However, it is important to keep in mind that patterns of sexual assault will vary in relation to community location and factors such as substance use and family and community dynamics (Aboriginal Child Sexual Assault Taskforce, 2006).

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children living in out-of-home care**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are over-represented in the Australian out-of-home care system. At 30 June 2016, approximately 36% (n = 16,846) of all children in out-of-home care were identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Overall, rates of out-of-home care for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have continued to increase between 2012 and 2016 (AIHW, 2017a). The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children placed in out-of-home care rose from 46.2/1,000 children in 2012 to 56.6/1,000 children in 2016 (AIHW, 2017a). In 2016, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were 9.8 times more likely than non-indigenous children to be in out-of-home care nationally with rate ratios ranging from 3.4 in Tasmania to 17.5 in Western Australia.

In all jurisdictions there were higher rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care than non-indigenous children.

**The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle**

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle

### Table 2: State and territory data comparing rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care compared to non-indigenous children on 30 June 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/territory</th>
<th>Indigenous (per 1,000 children)</th>
<th>Non-indigenous (per 1,000 children)</th>
<th>All children (per 1,000 children)</th>
<th>Rate ratio indigenous/non-indigenous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>71.6</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vic</td>
<td>87.4</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>65.7</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tas</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>79.8</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total population</strong></td>
<td><strong>56.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.8</strong></td>
<td><strong>8.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>9.8</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: AIHW, 2017b, Table S2.

### Table 3: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care, by indigenous status and relationship of carer, states and territories, at 30 June 2016, by percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carer relationship (%)</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>Vic</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>WA</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>Tas</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>NT</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous relative/kin</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other indigenous caregiver</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other relative/kin</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total placed with relative/kin other indigenous caregivers or in indigenous residential care</td>
<td>81.0</td>
<td>58.4</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>62.6</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>60.4</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>66.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total not placed with relative/kin other indigenous caregivers or in indigenous residential care</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>63.8</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: AIHW, 2017b, Table S42
Stolen Generations and the Way Ahead

The shortage of indigenous foster and kinship carers is one of the major factors preventing the implementation of the principle. Recruitment and retention of carers is a problem across the sector for both indigenous and non-indigenous carers (see Foster Families by Osborn, Panozzo, Richardson, & Bromfield, 2007). However, there are several other factors that are unique to indigenous communities and put severe strain on the ability for out-of-home care services to recruit appropriate indigenous carers.

The main factors include:
- A 'youth dependency ratio' imbalance due to the high numbers of indigenous children to adults
- Inadequate methods for identifying kin relationships and assessing carers
- Carer burnout
- Fear and mistrust of child welfare systems among some families, and
- Eligibility criteria that exclude some carers (Arney et al., 2015).

Despite the willingness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to provide care, there is, overall, less capacity to do so due to the multiple forms of disadvantage experienced by indigenous peoples (Arney et al., 2015). Even when children are placed in accordance with the principle they may become disconnected from their culture. This may occur when children are placed with, for example, the non-indigenous side of the family, an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander carer who is not from the child's own cultural group or kin who may have (because of their own removal) been disconnected from their traditional culture.

For more information see ‘Enhancing the Implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: Policy and Practice Considerations’ (Arney et al., 2015).

Cultural differences in child-rearing practices

One of the underlying issues that has led to an over-representation of indigenous children in the child protection system is the cultural differences between indigenous communities and welfare agencies in their understandings of family structure and child-rearing practices. Historically, this has meant that indigenous family structures and child-rearing practices have at times been mistakenly perceived as ‘unstable’ or ‘dysfunctional’ (HREOC, 1997). However, it is important to recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family structures and approaches to raising children can be a source of cultural strength and not, themselves, a source of dysfunction.

For more information, see ‘Strengths of Australian Aboriginal cultural practices in family life and child rearing’ (Lohoar, Butera, & Kennedy, 2014).

Why might Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children be more likely to be abused or neglected?

The reasons why Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children might be more likely to be abused or neglected are complex, and need to be approached with consideration of multiple historical, social, community, family and individual factors (Calma, 2008; Cripps & McGlade, 2008; Stanley et al., 2003).

The HREOC (1997) report, *Bringing them home*, concluded that some of the underlying causes for the poor outcomes experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and for the over-representation of indigenous children in child protection and out-of-home care were:

1. The child’s extended family (kin)
2. The child's indigenous community (kith)
3. With Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander carers
4. With non-indigenous carers.

The principle provides an important acknowledgement that previous policies caused suffering to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and reflects the right of indigenous people to raise their children in their communities (Arney, Iannos, Chong, McDougall, & Parkinson, 2015).

The percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children placed with relatives/kin, other indigenous caregivers or in an indigenous residential care facility varied substantially across jurisdictions (see Table 3). In Australia, in 2015-16, 66.2% of indigenous children were placed with relatives/kin, other indigenous caregivers or in indigenous residential care (AIHW, 2017b).

Why would children not be placed in accordance with the principle?

There are several barriers that prevent some children from being placed in accordance with the principle.

These barriers include:
- The increasing over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the statutory child protection system
- A shortage of indigenous foster and kinship carers
- Poor identification and assessment of carers
- Inconsistent involvement of, and support for, indigenous people and organisations in child protection decision-making
- Deficiencies in the provision of cultural care and connection to culture and community
- Practice and systemic issues affecting the operation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child care agencies, and
- Inconsistent quantification, measurement and monitoring of the principle across jurisdictions (Arney et al., 2015).

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The legacy of past policies of forced removal and cultural assimilation
Intergenerational effects of forced removals, and
Cultural differences between child protection agencies’ and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ understandings of child-rearing practices (see Box 1).

Historical and ongoing dispossession, marginalisation and racism experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have led to high levels of unresolved trauma and grief (HREOC, 1997). Internalised trauma may be expressed by individuals in various ways including psychological distress and destructive behaviours (Atkinson, 2002). Concerns have been voiced that some indigenous communities are experiencing intergenerational cycles of adversity and trauma, leading to entrenched social problems including poverty, high levels of violence, child abuse and neglect, and individual, family and community dysfunction (Atkinson, 2002; Robertson, 2000; Silburn et al., 2006; Stanley et al., 2003).

What action is being taken?
The National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009-2020 (Council of Australian Governments, 2009) aims to reduce child maltreatment and improve child protection responses for all Australian children but also makes specific mention of the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The Framework takes a public health approach to improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children through addressing issues of disadvantage, recognising and promoting family, community and cultural strengths and using community-wide strategies to address specific risk factors such as alcohol or substance abuse and/or domestic violence.

To help achieve this, the Third Action Plan 2015-2018 includes a cross-cutting focus area on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. Specifically, the Third Action Plan calls for a sustained commitment to ensure that the five domains of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (prevention, partnership, placement, participation and connection) are applied to the implementation of strategies and actions across all other focus areas. For more information, see the ‘Driving Change: Intervening Early. National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children: Third Three-Year Action Plan 2015–2018’ (Department of Social Services, 2015).

Family Matters: Strong Communities. Strong Culture. Stronger Children is a national campaign led by SNAICC that aims to eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 2040.

The plan to achieve this is based on four building blocks (SNAICC, 2016b):
1. All families enjoy access to quality, culturally safe, universal and targeted services necessary for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to thrive.
2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations participate in and have control over decisions that affect their children.
3. Law, policy and practice in child and family welfare are culturally safe and responsive.
4. Governments and services are accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (SNAICC, 2016b).

As part of the campaign, a report has been published describing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care, and exploring the economic, social and community-level factors that contribute to this over-representation. The report also makes recommendations for policy, practice and systemic reform.

For the full set of references for this paper, go to:

This paper was updated by Jessica Smart, Senior Research Officer with the Child Family Community Australia information exchange at the Australian Institute of Family Studies. Previous editions were compiled by Adam Dean, Kathryn Goldsworthy, Deborah Scott, Lalitha Nair, Dr Leah Bromfield, Briony Horsfall, Alister Lamont and Mel Irenyi.

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INDIGENOUS CHILDREN REMOVAL RATE MAY TRIPLE IN THE NEXT 20 YEARS

According to the latest report released by SNAICC, without urgent action the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children removed from family will triple in the next 20 years.

The rate at which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are removed from their families is an escalating national crisis. Without immediate action from all levels of government further generations of children will be lost to their families, cultures and communities, according to a new report from the Family Matters campaign.

The report reveals a shocking trend in the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, who are now nearly 10 times as likely to be removed from their family as non-indigenous children – a disparity which continues to grow.

“If we continue on this path, carved out by the flawed approaches of consecutive governments, the number...

FAMILY MATTERS REPORT: KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Development of a national comprehensive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Strategy which includes generational targets to eliminate over-representation and address the causes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child removal to improve child safety and wellbeing.

2. A target and strategy to increase proportional investment in evidence-informed and culturally supportive prevention and early intervention services that are accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

3. A target and strategy that recognise the unique role of, and provide sustainable funding for, a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled early years sector.

4. National standards to ensure legislation and changing practices in the family support and child protection system so that it adheres to all five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) including:
   a. Nationally consistent standards for implementation of all five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle and linked jurisdictional reporting requirements through the National Forum for Protecting Australia’s Children.
   b. Increased representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, children and communities at each stage of the decision making process, including through independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family-led decision making.
   c. Increased investment in reunification services to ensure children are not spending longer in OOHC than is necessary due to inadequate planning and support for parents; and increased investment in support services for families once children are returned.
   d. Increased efforts to connect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in OOHC to family and culture, through cultural support planning, family finding, return to country, and kinship care support programs.

5. Prioritise investment in service delivery by community-controlled organisations in line with self-determination, including through investment targets aligned to need and ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander first’ procurement policies for services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

6. Commit to a sustained increase in investment for family violence response and prevention, with a key focus on resourcing needs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations.

7. Development and publication of data to better measure the situation and causes of, and responses to, over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in OOHC. Data development should take account of identified gaps throughout this and last year’s report.

8. Establishment of state-based Commissioners, peak bodies and other representative bodies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Data from the Family Matters Report shows:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are 9.8 times more likely to be living in out-of-home care than non-indigenous children.
- Projected out-of-home care population growth suggests the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care will more than triple by 2036.
- From 2010 to 2018, the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in child death statistics has grown from a rate ratio of 1.84 to 2.23.
- Only 67% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Australia are placed with family, kin, or other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers.
- Only 2% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children commenced an intensive family support service in 2015-16, a rate well below their rate of contact with child protection services.
- Only 17% of overall child protection funding is invested in support services for children and their families.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are significantly less likely to access antenatal care during the first trimester of pregnancy.

Courtesy of SNAICC – national voice for our children.

ABOUT THE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILD PLACEMENT PRINCIPLE

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle aims to:

- Ensure an understanding that culture underpins and is integral to safety and wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection and OOHC systems.
- Recognise and protect the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, family members and communities in child welfare matters.
- Increase the level of self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in child welfare matters.
- Reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection and OOHC systems.

THE FIVE ELEMENTS OF THE PRINCIPLE ARE:

**Prevention:** Protecting children’s rights to grow up in family, community and culture by redressing the causes of child protection intervention.

**Partnership:** Ensuring the participation of community representatives in service design, delivery and individual case decisions.

**Placement:** Placing children in OOHC in accordance with the established ATSICPP placement hierarchy:
- With Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives or extended family members, or other relatives and family members, or
- With Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of the child’s community, or
- With Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family-based carers.

If the above preferred options are not available, as a last resort the child may be placed with:
- A non-indigenous carer or in a residential setting.

If the child is not placed according to the highest priority, the placement must be within close geographic proximity to the child’s family.

**Participation:** Ensuring the participation of children, parents and family members in decisions regarding the care and protection of their children.

**Connection:** Maintaining and supporting connections to family, community, culture and country for children in OOHC.

See SNAICC publication: Understanding and Applying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: A resource for legislation, policy and program development.

of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care will more than triple in the next 20 years.

“Twenty years ago, the ‘Bringing them home’ report brought public and political awareness to the destructive impact of the Stolen Generations on communities, families and children – a historical pain that has caused trauma with lasting impacts. We cannot allow the history of trauma to devastate yet another generation of our children.

“In the 20 years since ‘Bringing them home’, and nearly 10 years since the national apology, the numbers of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care have continued to escalate.”

– Natalie Lewis, Family Matters Co-Chair

The Family Matters Report shows that only 17 per cent of the child protection budget is spent on services aimed at preventing issues for families before they develop, while the bulk of spending is invested in reacting to problems when they arise.

The Family Matters Report clearly shows we have a system that invests in failure and not success.

“Only one in every five dollars spent on child protection is invested in family supports. Supportive and preventative services – designed to build the capacity of families to care for children and allow children to thrive – are crucial to addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care.”

– Natalie Lewis

The Family Matters Report provides a comprehensive analysis of child protections systems in every state and territory, judged against a series of building blocks to ensuring child safety and wellbeing.

The report reveals a shocking trend in the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, who are now nearly 10 times as likely to be removed from their family as non-indigenous children – a disparity which continues to grow.

“The disproportionate representation of our children, and the failure to adequately provide for their wellbeing and ensure fulfilment of their rights, are characteristics common to all jurisdictions.

“Those of us working for our communities are striving to address these fundamental system failures, but what we really need is governments to resource our vision for a better future for our children. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been forthcoming with solutions to these issues for many, many years. We need to work together now to prevent another generation of children growing up separated from their family, culture and connection to country.”

– Natalie Lewis

Family Matters is Australia’s national campaign to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children grow up safe and cared for surrounded by their own family, community and culture.

Courtesy of SNAICC – national voice for our children.

© Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (29 November 2017), Family Matters Report 2017: Without urgent action the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children removed from family will triple in the next 20 years.
What good was apology to Stolen Generations with limited reparations, more kids taken?

BY LUKE PEARSON FOR SPEAKING OUT, ABC RADIO

During the National Apology to Stolen Generations, the words “The First Step” were written in giant letters on the lawn of Parliament House. The decade that has followed could perhaps be summed up as “one step forward, two steps back”.

Ten years ago today, then prime minister Kevin Rudd made the apology, fulfilling one part of the third recommendation of the 1997 Bringing them home report, which stated that “reparation be made in recognition of the history of gross violations of human rights”.

In the report, this was broken down to five key components: acknowledgment and apology, guarantees against repetition, measures of restitution, measures of rehabilitation, and monetary compensation.

To date, New South Wales, Tasmania, Western Australia and South Australia have introduced some form of reparation scheme for members of the Stolen Generations. The Northern Territory, Queensland and Victoria are still yet to do so.

There have also been calls for the implementation of a national scheme, but the federal government has not as yet indicated that it intends to introduce one.

In the years since, members of the Stolen Generations have continued their calls for healing, justice, recognition, and guarantees against repeat, while their numbers have dwindled through the inevitable passage of time, exacerbated by the lower life expectancy that plagues indigenous peoples across the nation.

The idea of compensation for victims of the Stolen Generations has long been a contentious issue.

“It’s part of the justice system, when a wrong is done to somebody they can be compensated for it,” Richard Weston, chief executive officer of The Healing Foundation, told Awaye!

“What amount can you give that would give someone back their childhood? But it’s a gesture that can be made by a nation.”

The foundation was formed on the first anniversary of the Apology, to address the harmful legacy of colonisation and child removal.

 “[We need to] learn from what they’ve been through, to learn about how trauma impacts on people and changes their lives forever and what we need to do to heal it,” Mr Weston said.

Perhaps even more contentious 10 years on is the report’s recommendation of a ‘guarantee against repetition’. The past 10 years have been a rollercoaster in Australian politics, but nowhere more so than in the area of Indigenous Affairs. In that time, we have seen the Indigenous Affairs portfolio absorbed into the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet followed by a funding cut of over $500 million.

The aftermath of the NT intervention has made it difficult to have a reasonable discussion about issues of community cohesion, family support, and child removal. Some in the media have actually gone so far as to explicitly call for another Stolen Generation.

To date, New South Wales, Tasmania, Western Australia and South Australia have introduced some form of reparation scheme for members of the Stolen Generations. The Northern Territory, Queensland and Victoria are still yet to do so.

But perhaps such calls are redundant. Today in Australia one in three children in out-of-home care is indigenous, and rates of children in out-of-home care are 9.8 times higher for indigenous children than their non-indigenous counterparts.

If the rate of child removal stays on its current trajectory, the number of children in out-of-home care will triple by 2035.

Yet there has been far too little attention paid to why children are removed, what happens to them after they are removed, and what strategies are in place to return children, where possible, to their families.

The treatment of children in juvenile detention centres has grabbed headlines recently, but this issue is not unrelated. Research suggests many young people who are in the justice system have had previous contact with child protection services.

Such a drastic and continuing increase in child removals should constitute a national crisis. Greater scrutiny of these practices and a focus on the trauma experienced by removed children is needed. And as for the surviving members of the original Stolen Generations,
Compensation schemes for victims of the Stolen Generations

To date (as at September 2018), New South Wales, Tasmania, Western Australia and South Australia have introduced some form of reparation scheme for members of the Stolen Generations. The Northern Territory, Queensland and Victoria are still yet to do so. The idea of compensation for victims of the Stolen Generations has been a longstanding and contentious issue. There have been repeated appeals for the implementation of a national reparation program, however the federal government has resisted calls for a national fund.

Reparations schemes have been introduced in the following states:

**Tasmania**

In 2006, Tasmania became the first Australian state to agree to financial compensation for Aborigines forcibly removed from their families by Australian government agencies and church missions between about 1900 and 1972.

In 2008, Tasmanian members of the Stolen Generations and their children were paid lump sums of about $58,000 and $5,000 respectively under Australia's first compensation fund for Aboriginal children forcibly removed from their families.

**South Australia**

In March 2016 a compensation scheme came into effect for South Australian members of the Stolen Generations with the establishment of a $11 million reparation fund. South Australia is the second state government to create such a scheme after Tasmania. An estimated 300 members of the Stolen Generations are eligible for payments of up to $50,000 under the scheme. Some $6 million of the $11 million scheme will be distributed as ex gratia payments to members of SA’s Aboriginal communities who were removed from their families and whose usual place of residence was within the state at the time of separation; the remaining $5 million would be used for ‘whole-of-community reparations’, such as memorials, counselling and support programs, scholarships and exhibitions telling the stories of the Stolen Generations.

**New South Wales**

In 2016, New South Wales followed the lead of the Tasmanian and South Australian governments in paying reparations to Aboriginal people who were part of the Stolen Generations. The compensation is part of a package aimed at addressing the trauma and harm caused by the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families.

The $73 million compensation package includes:
- one-off payments to survivors
- four Stolen Generations Organisations to get direct funding over the next 10 years
- $5 million to a Stolen Generations Healing Fund for healing activities, healing centres, keeping places and memorials
- $7,000 to a Stolen Generations Funeral Fund
- better administrative processes for survivors needing to access identity records to help prove their aboriginality
- establishment of a Stolen Generation Advisory Committee.

**Western Australia**

The Western Australian Government established a redress scheme, but only for people who have suffered abuse or neglect with ongoing effects. The Redress WA scheme was set up to acknowledge and apologise to adults who, as children, were abused and/or neglected while they were in the care of the state. It ran from 2008 till the end of 2011.

WORKSHEETS AND ACTIVITIES

The Exploring Issues section comprises a range of ready-to-use worksheets featuring activities which relate to facts and views raised in this book.

The exercises presented in these worksheets are suitable for use by students at middle secondary school level and beyond. Some of the activities may be explored either individually or as a group.

As the information in this book is compiled from a number of different sources, readers are prompted to consider the origin of the text and to critically evaluate the questions presented.

Is the information cited from a primary or secondary source? Are you being presented with facts or opinions?

Is there any evidence of a particular bias or agenda? What are your own views after having explored the issues?

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Brainstorm, individually or as a group, to find out what you know about the Stolen Generations.

1. Approximately how long have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples inhabited Australia, and when did the British claim it as their own?

2. What does the term *terra nullius* mean, and how does it relate to Australian history?

3. What does the term ‘Stolen Generations’ mean, and who does it apply to?

4. What is the *Bringing them home* report, and why is it important?

5. What is National Sorry Day, and what is the significance of the date on which it falls?
Complete the following activities on a separate sheet of paper if more space is required.

“The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia’s history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.
We apologise … For the future we take heart … A future where we harness the determination of all Australians, indigenous and non-indigenous, to close the gap … A future where we embrace the possibility of new solutions to enduring problems where old approaches have failed.”

Extract from then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd’s Apology to the Stolen Generations.

The extract above is from the Apology speech to the Stolen Generations delivered by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd on 13 February 2008. In the spaces below address the following questions relating to the Apology.

1. What was the significance of the national Apology for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

2. What was the significance of the Apology for non-indigenous people?

3. What does the word ‘sorry’ mean to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

4. What, if any, reparations have been made to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples since the Apology was made?

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Complete the following activities on a separate sheet of paper if more space is required.

“The failure to implement the recommendations of the ‘Bringing them home’ report has prolonged the social burden of trauma caused by forced child removals and potentially exposed another generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to harm.”


Form into groups of two or more people to discuss the following topics relating to the Bringing them home report: its history, findings and recommendations. Make a list of your ideas to share with other groups in the class.

1. In your groups formulate arguments that may have been used for and against taking Aboriginal children away from their families. To assist, imagine you were responsible for the original policies that resulted in taking the children away from their families.

2. Discuss the factors responsible for the continuing rise in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection and out-of-home care since the release of the Bringing them home report.

3. Discuss ideas for establishing a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) for your school or educational institution. Take into consideration the recommendations from the Bringing them home report when developing ideas for your plan.
Complete the following activities on a separate sheet of paper if more space is required.

Using the school and/or local public library as well as the internet, research information relating to the local history of Indigenous Australians and Stolen Generations members in your area. Making contact with locally-based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can also help you with the following activities – parents or elders are a good place to begin your research.

1. Identify stories of significance relating to the Stolen Generations in your local area or region. Your sources could include movies, documentaries, online videos, art, songs, poetry or books.

2. List local sites of historical significance relating to Indigenous Australians and the Stolen Generations (may include landmarks, memorials, protest sites, institutions). Explain why these sites are significant.

3. Identify any events held in your area that relate to the acknowledgement of Indigenous Australians, the Stolen Generations and Reconciliation (e.g. National Sorry Day). Include dates, locations, event details and explain what the event is addressing or acknowledging.
Complete the following multiple choice questionnaire by circling or matching your preferred responses. The answers are at the end of this page.

1. How many recommendations did the Bringing them home report (1997) identify to support healing and reconciliation?
   a. 5
   b. 14
   c. 25
   d. 45
   e. 54
   f. 85
   g. 104

2. Which of the following events occurred on 26 May 1998?
   a. Release of the Bringing them home report
   b. National referendum to amend the Australian Constitution
   c. First National Sorry Day
   d. Prime Minister’s Apology to the Stolen Generations
   e. First anniversary of the Apology
   f. Aborigines Protection Act established

3. In what year was the Aboriginal Tent Embassy first pitched outside Parliament House in Canberra to demonstrate land rights?
   a. 1788
   b. 1956
   c. 1967
   d. 1972
   e. 1998
   f. 2008

4. In what year did the First Fleet land in Australia for British settlement?
   a. 1770
   b. 1788
   c. 1901
   d. 1911
   e. 1950
   f. 1998

5. In what year was a referendum held that resulted in alterations to the Constitution to remove references to ‘Aboriginal people’, so that all people in Australia were to be subject to the same laws?
   a. 1788
   b. 1956
   c. 1967
   d. 1972
   e. 1998
   f. 2008

MULTIPLE CHOICE ANSWERS
1 = e; 2 = c; 3 = d; 4 = b; 5 = c.
Aboriginal people and their ancestors have occupied Australia for at least 40,000 years (AHRC, Australia – a national overview). (p.1)

On 26 January 1788, the First Fleet landed carrying some 1,000 people, more than 700 of whom were convicts. The British also brought over a system of law, administration and cultural practices. Their vision of settlement was based on the European doctrine of terra nullius, or unoccupied land. This justification for settlement was used in spite of contact with Aboriginal people since Cook’s landing. No treaty or agreement for land use was made (ibid). (p.1)

By 1911, in the name of protection, Aboriginal people were subject to near-total control. Their entry and exit from the reserves was controlled, as was their everyday life on the reserves, their right to marry and their employment (ibid). (p.2)

During the 1950s and 1960s, increasingly greater numbers of indigenous children were separated from their families to advance the cause of assimilation (ibid). (p.4)

In 1971, more than 97% of foster-care children in the Northern Territory were indigenous (ibid). (p.4)

By the early 1970s indigenous people were working with some non-indigenous people to lobby and protest to government for land rights, cultural property rights, recognition of disadvantage suffered from colonisation including the taking away of indigenous children and a range of other social justice issues (ibid). (p.4)

In 1967, a national referendum was held to amend the Constitution. Australians conferred power on the Commonwealth to make laws for Aboriginal people. Aborigines were included in the census for the first time (AHRC, Historical context – the Stolen Generations). (p.6)

In 1972, the Aboriginal Tent Embassy was pitched outside Parliament House in Canberra to demonstrate for land rights (ibid). (p.7)

In 2008, the federal government publicly apologised to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia for the forced removals of their children throughout history. (p.8)

The term ‘Stolen Generations’ refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians who were forcibly removed, as children, from their families and communities and placed into institutional care or with non-indigenous foster families (Healing Foundation, The Apology to the Stolen Generations). (p.18)

The word ‘sorry’ in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and cultures holds special meaning, often used to describe the rituals surrounding death (Sorry Business). Sorry, in this context, expresses empathy, sympathy and an acknowledgment of loss rather than responsibility (ibid). (p.19)

The first Sorry Day was held in 1998, one year after the report Bringing them home was first tabled in parliament (Spinney Press, Sorry Day). (p.20)

In 2007-08 there were 9,070 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care. And in 2016-17 there were 17,664. This is an 80% increase in the rate of removals (Oscar, J, Tenth Anniversary of the Apology). (p.23)

Bringing them home was the name given to the final report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families conducted by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (AHRC, Bringing them home: 20 years on). (p.26)

Between 1 in 3 and 1 in 10 indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families and communities between 1910 and 1970 (AHRC, Trauma affects generations after Bringing Them Home report). (p.28)

A compensation scheme was one of the key recommendations of the Bringing them home report and was also recommended by a Senate inquiry in 2000. But the federal government has deflected responsibility for compensation to the churches, and state government welfare agencies directly involved in child removal (Wahlquist, C, 'Unfinished business' of Stolen Generations puts more children at risk – report). (p.37)

It is estimated that about 17,000 members of the Stolen Generations are still alive in 2018. Over half (56%) are female, and the majority (75%) live in non-remote areas. Most live in NSW (30%), WA (22%) and QLD (21%). Two-thirds are aged 50 and over, while 20% are over 65 (AIHW, New report shows long-term disadvantage for Australia’s Stolen Generations). (p.39)

In 2014-15, close to 115,000 Indigenous Australians aged 18 and over were descended from relatives in older generations who had been removed from their families. This includes around 15,000 who were also removed themselves from their families as children (ibid). (p.39)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are over-represented in child protection and out-of-home care services compared to non-indigenous children (AIFS, Child protection and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children). (p.41)

In 2015-16, harm or risk of harm from child abuse or neglect was substantiated or confirmed by statutory child protection services for 12,901 indigenous children aged 0-17 years across Australia (ibid). (p.42)

Inquiries into child sexual abuse in WA, NSW and the NT have concluded that the sexual abuse of indigenous children was common, widespread and significantly under-reported (ibid). (p.43)

In Australia, in 2015-16, 66.2% of indigenous children were placed with relatives/kin, other indigenous caregivers or in indigenous residential care (ibid). (p.44)

As of September 2018, NSW, Tasmania, WA and SA have introduced some form of reparation scheme for members of the Stolen Generations. The NT, Queensland and Victoria are still yet to do so (Spinney Press, Compensation schemes for victims of the Stolen Generations). (p.50)
Stolen Generations and the Way Ahead

Stolen Generations.

The children, grandchildren and future generations of the generations. Intergenerational trauma particularly affects have not healed can pass on their trauma to further generations. Survivors of the initial experience who A form of historical trauma transmitted across requiring them to abandon their original culture/s.

Intergenerational trauma

The action or process of settling among and establishing control over the indigenous people and land of an area.

Dispossession

Removal of people from their lands which had been occupied and cared for by their ancestors over thousands of years.

Healing

Recovery from the psychological and physical impacts of trauma. For ATSI people this trauma is predominantly the result of colonisation and past government policies. Healing is not an outcome or a cure but a process that is unique to each individual. Healing enables individuals, families and communities to gain control over the direction of their lives and reach their full potential. Healing continues throughout a person's lifetime and across generations, can take many forms, and is underpinned by a strong cultural and spiritual base.

Identity

The distinctive characteristic which belongs to an individual, or is shared by all members of a group. It can be a sense of who you are and the community or communities you are a part of.

Indigenous peoples

Collective term for the first peoples of a land in international communities. The term Indigenous Australians is used when speaking about both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within Australia.

Integration

Former government policy in relation to both Aboriginal peoples and migrant groups which sought to facilitate their amalgamation into mainstream Australian society, without requiring them to abandon their original culture/s.

Intergenerational trauma

A form of historical trauma transmitted across generations. Survivors of the initial experience who have not healed can pass on their trauma to further generations. Intergenerational trauma particularly affects the children, grandchildren and future generations of the Stolen Generations.

Stolen Generations

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were forcibly removed from their families as a result of past Australian government policies, from the late 1800s to the 1970s. These children were sent to institutions or adopted to non-indigenous families and separated from their culture, family, land and identity.

Trauma

Trauma affects a person's physical or emotional safety and is usually caused by a stressful event or series of events. The person may respond with feelings of intense fear, helplessness or horror. These traumas can occur at a personal or collective level, and can affect a person throughout their life and in different ways. If people have not had the opportunity to heal, they may express their pain through negative behaviours including physical or emotional violence, abuse or addiction.
Websites with further information on the topic

Australian Human Rights Commission  www.humanrights.gov.au
Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet  https://healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au
Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies  www.aiatsis.gov.au
Australian Institute of Family Studies  www.aifs.gov.au
Australians Together  www.australianstogether.org.au
Bringing Them Home  https://bth.humanrights.gov.au
Family Matters  www.familymatters.org.au
Healing Foundation  http://healingfoundation.org.au
Reconciliation Australia  www.reconciliation.org.au
Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC)  www.snaicc.org.au

LINK-UP SERVICES AROUND AUSTRALIA

New South Wales/Australian Capital Territory
Link-Up (NSW) Aboriginal Corporation:
www.linkupnsw.org.au

Northern Territory
Northern Territory Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation: www.ntsgac.org.au
Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation: www.caac.org.au

Queensland
Link-Up (Qld)  www.link-upqld.org.au

South Australia
Nunkuwarrin Yunti of South Australia Inc.:
nunku.org.au/our-services/social-emotional/link-up/

Victoria/ Tasmania
Link-Up Victoria:  www.linkupvictoria.org.au

Western Australia
Kimberley Stolen Generation Aboriginal Corporation:
kimberleystolengeneration.com.au
Yorgum Aboriginal Corporation:  www.yorgum.org.au

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ILLUSTRATIONS AND PHOTOGRAPHS


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➢ SNAICC
➢ Healing Foundation
➢ Australian Human Rights Commission.

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