



# NEW SOUTH WALES RECONCILIATION COUNCIL

## INFORMATION SHEET

### First Anniversary of the National Apology - Time to Make Amends

#### ☀ A Time to Celebrate

The first anniversary of the national apology is a time to celebrate - a time to celebrate its symbolism and its impact. The apology:

- Specifically apologised to the Stolen Generations, their families, and communities, and recognised their loss and grief
- Acknowledged the injustices of all past government policies, in particular the forced removal of Indigenous children
- Validated the experiences of the Stolen Generations – an important step in the healing process
- Caused non-Indigenous Australians to reflect on the pain and suffering endured by Indigenous Australians, and the continuing impact of those policies today, and
- Demonstrated the Australian Government's acceptance of responsibility for the actions of past governments.

#### ☀ A Time to Reflect

What has been *recommended* to government?

A comprehensive process of reparations was a key recommendation of the 1997 *Bringing Them Home* Report. Reparations means making amends for wrong or injury done. Under International Human Rights Law, five measures are recognised as essential steps in a process of reparations (the *Van Boven Principles*):

- i. Acknowledgement and apology
- ii. Guarantees against repetition
- iii. Measures of restitution
- iv. Measures of rehabilitation, and
- v. Monetary compensation.

What has been *promised* by government?

- Federal, State and Territory Governments have all promised various forms of redress to the Stolen Generations. However, no government has promised to engage with a comprehensive reparations process.
- A distinction must be drawn between 'closing the gap' and 'reparations' for the Stolen Generations. Basic citizenship rights (such as rights to health, education, housing) must not be confused with reparations for past injustices.

What has been *delivered* by government?

- Australian Governments have engaged with parts of the reparations process and delivered some forms of redress, however these have been insufficient.
- An evaluation of government programs has shown that measures implemented by governments have been inadequate and had major limitations.

## ☘ A Time to Make Amends

Providing reparations for the Stolen Generations is an important next step for all Australians. Our treatment of the Stolen Generations will have a profound influence on the values of our society for years to come. *“Doing what we can to right the wrongs of the past goes to the heart of our national character. It also sets an example to future generations”* (Nicole Watson, 2008).

- Federal, State and Territory Governments have not done nearly enough to make *amends* for past injustices to the Stolen Generations.
- Members of the Stolen Generations and their families have suffered, and continue to experience loss, grief and trauma. Reparations packages need to provide individuals and communities, with the means to heal and the means to move forward in a self-determined way that can sustainably improve social, cultural and economic well-being.
- According to extensive research and consultations with members of the Stolen Generations, a Tribunal Model has been identified as the most appropriate mechanism for the delivery of reparations.
- The Federal Government can kick-start the reparations process and begin to genuinely make amends for the Stolen Generations by passing the *Stolen Generations Reparations Tribunal Bill 2008*.

## ☘ What You Can Do

Contact Federal Senators & show your support for the *Stolen Generations Reparations Tribunal Bill 2008*

- The Stolen Generations Reparations Tribunal Bill 2008 has been commended to the Senate and is currently awaiting consideration.
- To mark the anniversary of the apology, email, call, or write a letter to Federal Senators informing them of your support for the Bill – A template letter is available at [www.nswrecon.com](http://www.nswrecon.com). For contact details of all Senators go to <http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/senators/index.htm>

## ☘ Find Out More

NSW Reconciliation Council – Apology Anniversary Discussion Paper & Speeches by Debra Hocking, Andrea Durbach and Nicole Watson, Reparations Forum 2008

[www.nswrecon.com](http://www.nswrecon.com)

Bringing Them Home Report & Education Resources

[www.hreoc.gov.au/social\\_justice/bth\\_report/index.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/bth_report/index.html)

National Sorry Day Committee

[www.nsd.org.au](http://www.nsd.org.au)

Stolen Generations Alliance

[www.sgalliance.org.au](http://www.sgalliance.org.au)

Reconciliation Australia – resources on the apology to the Stolen Generations

[www.reconciliation.org.au/i-cms.jsp?page=830](http://www.reconciliation.org.au/i-cms.jsp?page=830)

NSW Bringing Them Home Consultative Forum

<http://nswcommunities.org.au/1532.html>

Bringing Them Home Program – Dept Health & Ageing

<http://health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/bringing-them-home-lp>

The Stolen Generations Reparations Tribunal Bill 2008

[http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/legislation/bills/s654\\_first/toc\\_pdf/0820120.pdf;fileType%3Dapplication%2Fpdf](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/legislation/bills/s654_first/toc_pdf/0820120.pdf;fileType%3Dapplication%2Fpdf)