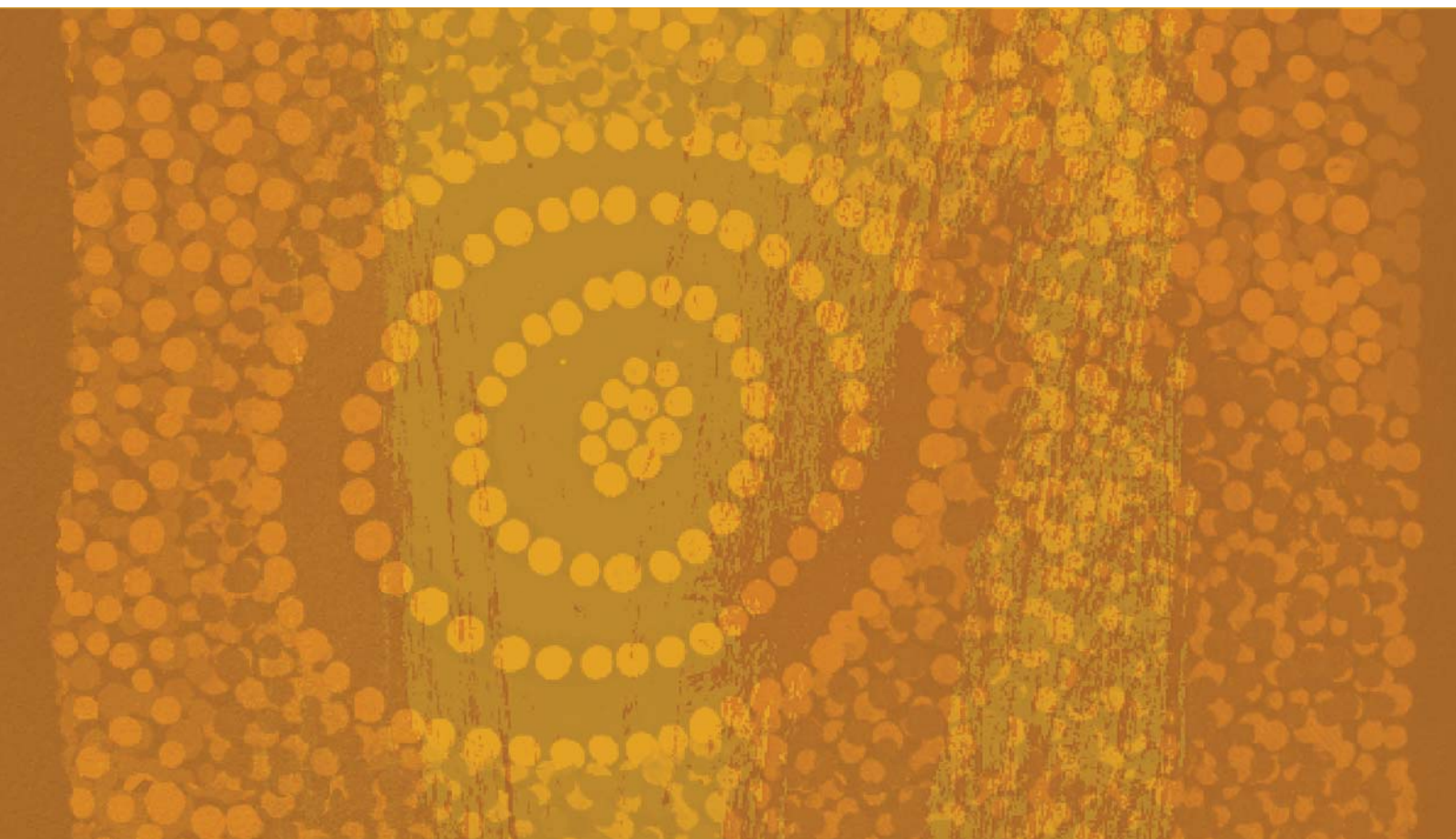




Australian Government

Stolen Generations Working Partnership



"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."

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, 13 February 2008

Stolen Generations Working Partnership

On 13 February 2008, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd offered the National Apology in a spirit of respect, and in recognition of the profound grief, suffering and loss inflicted on Stolen Generations.

At the time it was acknowledged that words alone were not enough.

Since the National Apology, the Australian Government has increased funding to \$25 million per year for family reunion services for Stolen Generations' members and Bringing Them Home Counsellors (a funding increase of 50 per cent between 2007–08 and 2009–10).

A further \$26 million has been allocated towards the establishment of a new and independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation, which will focus on the healing needs and aspirations of the Stolen Generations.

The *Bringing them home* report (1997)

Bringing them home was a watershed report because it documented the experiences of many survivors of the Stolen Generations from across the country. It also presented 54 recommendations for action by the Australian Government and state and territory governments, churches and the non-government sector. The Australian Government—across a number of portfolios—has responded to the report, implementing some parts of its recommendations.

Submissions to the *Bringing them home* report clearly demonstrated the ongoing effects of forcible removal from family and country on the wellbeing of members of the Stolen Generations and their children.

Every year since the report was released, on 26 May 1997, community advocates have acknowledged the anniversary of National Sorry Day and led a national campaign for social justice for the Stolen Generations. This year on 26 May, the Australian Government reflects on what more needs to be accomplished and what we can agree to work on together.

A new national focus and partnership

Through the Stolen Generations' Working Partnership (this document), the Australian Government is inviting a partnership with Stolen Generations and their supporters to address the immediate and practical needs of the Stolen Generations. The majority of Stolen Generations are now over 45 years of age. Many are Elders or leaders in their family or community. Ongoing support is needed to deal with the daily experience of various types of trauma, loss and grief, and to help whole families and future generations to stop the cycle of trauma from continuing.

The policy landscape has changed significantly since the release of the *Bringing them home* report in 1997, especially since the change in national government in 2007.

Taking into account the range of reforms and investments underway, this Working Partnership provides a platform for Government, service providers and the Stolen Generations to work together. We will work to respond to the priority issues identified in this document, drawing on existing programs and resources. As part of this work, it will be important to look carefully at the recommendations in the *Bringing them home* report.

Through this Working Partnership the Australian Government reaffirms its commitment to the Stolen Generations, recognising both their desire to articulate and lead their own pathways and solutions, and the need for broader understanding within the Australian community.

In addition to Stolen Generations' advocates and organisations, government agencies, service providers, peak bodies, churches, businesses, community groups and individuals are encouraged to participate and contribute.

Engagement with the Stolen Generations

Stolen Generations' key stakeholders include nationally-based and regionally and locally-based Stolen Generations' organisations, and Link-Up Services. This document was developed in consultation with the two national Stolen Generations' bodies. Throughout implementation we will continue to work with them, and inclusively and openly with a range of Stolen Generation organisations. The Australian Government acknowledges the importance of ongoing advocacy by Stolen Generations to address all of the issues that concern them.

Become involved:

The Australian Government has created a quarterly Stolen Generations' newsletter to keep members of the Stolen Generations' communities, as well as Stolen Generations' organisations, abreast of new opportunities. To subscribe to this newsletter OR to register your organisation's interest in becoming involved with this partnership, please email: StolenGenerations@fahcsia.gov.au

Priority issues

Some priority issues were highlighted by Stolen Generations' advocates in the development of this Working Partnership and are acknowledged here as a starting point for collaboration with the Australian Government. These priorities have been supported by other key services in the health and well being sector, as well as in community consultations—for example during the development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation.

1. Access to services –

- a. Greater awareness is needed across government and non-government sectors including Indigenous and main stream service providers, policy makers and public servants.
- b. Stolen Generations need to feel that they have sufficient opportunity to participate in decision making about how services are delivered to them and lead the development of their own solutions.
- c. In services designed for Stolen Generations' members, priority should be given as much as possible to the present needs of Stolen Generations' members. Special attention should also be given to older members of the Stolen Generations.
- d. Appropriate diagnosis and pathways to care for Stolen Generations' members with social and emotional well being issues is needed.
- e. Collection and availability of data and evidence on Stolen Generations' as a distinct group within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data collections is needed.
- f. The difficulty in establishing Proof of Aboriginality because of ad hoc processes and a lack of a system for mediation, appeal or counselling if a claim is rejected needs to be addressed.

2. Healing –

- a. Record oral histories and other ways to honour Stolen Generations' experiences and resilience.
- b. Create places of belonging and acceptance and maintain connection with other Stolen Generations' members, recognising that some will remain very close throughout life to those they grew up with in institutions.
- c. Recognise the importance that culture and connection to country has to restoring identity, as well as re-unifying with family wherever possible.
- d. Establish a successful relationship between Stolen Generations and the new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation to empower Stolen Generations to develop their own healing programs and support groups, as well as an evidence base of what works.

3. Justice System –

- a. Support Stolen Generations' members and their children who are in prison, both pre- and post-release.
- b. Availability of training to police, legal aid workers, judicial staff and corrective services staff, so they

understand the life-long impacts of institutionalisation and how to most effectively work with members of Stolen Generations and their families.

4. Education –

- a. Incorporate Stolen Generations' resources into the schools curriculum, university training for Australian teachers, and training for trainers in the Vocational Education and Training sector.
- b. Build broader community awareness about the history and resilience of Stolen Generations, including within both Indigenous and broader communities.

Responding to priorities

The Australian Government has taken practical steps to progress the specific initiatives and priority areas identified in this Working Partnership document.

1. Keeping the memory alive

Since 2007, the Australian Government has:

- Launched the Bringing Them Home Oral History Project webpage, which will see up to 300 oral histories made available online, giving the community greater access to these recordings and ensuring the ongoing preservation of the Stolen Generations' stories. Currently, 89 interviews are online.
- Provided \$100,000 in funding (2009–10) to the Kanyini Foundation to commence a pilot in New South Wales to record Stolen Generations' stories on film and make these available on a purpose-built website.
- Provided funding for the National Sorry Day Committee and the Stolen Generations Alliance to hold their annual general meetings and events associated with National Sorry Day and the Anniversary of the Apology to the Stolen Generations.

Acknowledging and improving awareness about Stolen Generations' experiences is an important element of the priority issues identified above. Through this Working Partnership, we will work to:

- Support Stolen Generations to record their experiences and reflections—through diverse media, such as written and oral histories, art, songs and poetry—and ensure these are stored and catalogued. For example, the Australian Government is funding the National Library to make the stories of Stolen Generations more available through online media, and to work with national and state and territory archives and other bodies to improve access to records.
- Draw on these materials to inform the development of professional resources for use in schools and training programs.
- Honour and remember the experiences of Stolen Generations and keep these memories alive before the general population by marking the Anniversary of the Apology to the Stolen Generations' and National Sorry Day, and consider other initiatives such as memorials, Keeping Places, essay or art exhibitions and travelling displays.

- Empower the Stolen Generations to be involved in community education about the history and resilience of the Stolen Generations and make this part of the broader reconciliation movement and Indigenous community activities (for example, during National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee Week (NAIDOC)).
- Ensure Stolen Generations' perspectives are included in the development and implementation of initiatives which strengthen Indigenous culture and sense of identity—such as the National Indigenous Languages Action Plan, which encourages more grass-roots collaboration between language learning programs and Stolen Generations' members and their organisations.
- **Bringing Them Home Counsellors**—fund counsellors to provide counselling to individuals and families affected by past practices of forced removal and, where possible, integrate them into Link-Up Services.
- **Link-Up Services**—provide family tracing, reunion and support services to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were separated from their families and communities as a result of past laws, policies and practices of Australian Governments.
- **Workforce Support Units**—provide workforce support services for the Bringing Them Home Counsellors, Link-Up Services workers and, Substance Use Workers. These arrangements involve strengthening the Indigenous Social and Emotional Well Being health workforce through: peer support; development of cross-sector linkages and interagency cooperation; identification of training needs; and coordination of mental health and social and emotional well being training delivery with Registered Training Organisations.

2. Continue and improve support through Stolen Generations' specific initiatives

Since 2007, the Australian Government has provided:

- \$15.7 million (2007–08) over four years for additional resources and support to enable additional reunions of Stolen Generations' members with their families through Link-Up Services and also to fund an extra 20 Bringing Them Home Counsellors.
- An additional \$13.8 million over three years (2009–10 Budget) to expand and strengthen Link-Up Services to address the critical backlog, as well as improve the preservation of and access to records for family tracing and reunions. This measure funds Link-Up Services to provide Return to Country and institutional reunions.

There are currently over 120 full-time Bringing Them Home Counsellors located in 80 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations.

- \$26.6 million (2009–10 Budget) for the establishment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation. The Foundation will support community-based healing initiatives for Indigenous Australians affected by past government policies such as forced removal, with a strong focus on the Stolen Generations.

On 7 May 2010, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation announced its first funding round of \$2 million for local, community-led healing projects to help people overcome the underlying causes of trauma and prevent the cycle from continuing.

- Small grants funding to Stolen Generations' organisations and organisations which support Stolen Generations' members. The aim of this funding was to assist organisations to serve the needs of Stolen Generations' members at the grassroots level.

The Australian Government recognises that the Stolen Generations are in need of targeted services which address their particular needs, such as help with tracing, reconnecting and maintaining connection with their families. The Government also recognises the critical need for healing services to be led by Stolen Generations to overcome the trauma of removal and the associated intergenerational effects.

Through this Working Partnership, we will work with specialist services and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation on the priority issues outlined in this document:

- **The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Healing Foundation**—addresses trauma and aids healing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, with a focus on incorporating Stolen Generations' needs and issues. The Foundation is an independent, Indigenous-run organisation that focuses on:
 - » providing funding and capacity development to grassroots healing initiatives, including those which assist in the healing of Stolen Generations' survivors, in response to community needs.
 - » healing promotion, education and skills training in the prevention and treatment of trauma.
 - » contributing to an evidence base for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing through community-driven and culturally appropriate research and evaluation.

3. New Responses to Emerging Needs

The Australian Government will be responsive to the emerging needs of the Stolen Generations by:

- Seeking innovative aged care responses for members of the Stolen Generations, taking into consideration their differing needs, and increasing the knowledge and awareness of aged care service providers about those needs.
- Developing new policy responses to the intergenerational impacts of the Stolen Generations, particularly looking at targeting young people as they make the transition to adulthood.
- Exploring alternative or emerging technologies to improve family tracing, where that tracing is complicated by multiple removals or lack of records.

4. Building capacity and connections with mainstream and other Indigenous services

Since 2007, the Australian Government has:

- Invested \$585,000 in the leadership skills of the Stolen Generations to support them as community advocates, including:
 - » At least 10 scholarships totalling \$81,000, for members of the Stolen Generations to undertake

a Certificate II in Indigenous Leadership at the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre.

- » The National Stolen Generations' Indigenous Leadership Program, through which participants will have the chance to meet with other Indigenous peoples from diverse backgrounds and get involved in leadership activities, and in one-on-one and group discussions.
- » Support for local events around the country to mark the Second Anniversary of the National Apology.

Through this Working Partnership, the Australian Government will also focus on the capacity of other Indigenous and mainstream service providers to effectively engage with Stolen Generations by:

- Ensuring that training for staff of government and community services with significant proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients includes an understanding of the impact of the forced removal of Indigenous children. The services provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients must be sensitive to the needs of the Stolen Generations and should encourage the Stolen Generations to be involved in decision making about the services provided to them.
- Building linkages between specialist services for Stolen Generations' members and mainstream and other Indigenous services to help these services better fit the special needs of these clients. Both mainstream and Indigenous services need to better understand why members of the Stolen Generations are hesitant to engage with them and how to effectively engage and meet the needs of these clients. These services include, but are not limited to:
 - » Centrelink
 - » Indigenous Community Support Services
 - » Personal Helpers and Mentors Services
 - » Family Relationship Services
 - » Family Support Services
 - » Child and Maternal Support Services, including Indigenous Child and Family Centres
 - » Indigenous Parenting Support Services and Indigenous Playgroup Providers
 - » Emergency Relief Services
 - » Homelessness Services
 - » Legal Aid Services
 - » Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services
 - » Aboriginal Legal Services
 - » Residential Aged Care Services
 - » National Archives and other record keeping institutions
 - » Native Title Services
 - » Aboriginal Carers Services.
- Working with mainstream and other Indigenous services, including police, legal services, courts and corrective services, to support members of the Stolen Generations and their families involved in the criminal justice systems.
- Examining arrangements between Centrelink and Link-Up Services to assist with tracing family members of Stolen Generations while maintaining the

utmost care, respect and responsibility for personal privacy issues.

- Governments have agreed, as part of the Council of Australian Governments' National Urban and Regional Service Delivery Strategy for Indigenous Australians, to recognise the importance of working in partnership with Indigenous organisations to strengthen and support families and children affected by past policies of forced removal. An important first step in fulfilling this commitment will be to examine ways to improve the identification of members of the Stolen Generations within existing data collections across a range of key agencies and services.

5. Recognition in public policy

The Australian Government wants to ensure that the special needs of Stolen Generations' members are recognised and responded to in public policy development. Relevant frameworks include:

- » Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan, and forthcoming Training Plan.
- » Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework—currently being reviewed. The Framework for 2010–15 is being developed through the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council.
- » The Council of Australian Governments' National Integrated Strategy for Closing the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage.
- » The Council of Australian Governments' National Action Plan on Mental Health 2006–2011
- » Health Workforce Australia—The Council of Australian Governments is establishing Health Workforce Australia, to manage and oversee major reforms to the Australian health workforce.
- » National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020, including the Non-Government Organisations' consultative forum
- » National Indigenous Languages Policy
- » National Indigenous Reform Agreement
- » National Indigenous Law and Justice Framework 2009–2015
- » National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health 2003–2013.

Other important work is also being undertaken by independent bodies on teaching professional standards and curriculum development, in which engagement with Stolen Generations' organisations and leaders will be encouraged.

This work across public policy will be aimed at responding to the priority issues identified in this Stolen Generations' Working Partnership document. As part of this work, it will be important to look carefully at the recommendations in the Bringing them home report.

