



Are We Helping Them Home?

Surveys of progress in the implementation of the *Bringing Them Home* recommendations by November 2002

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for the National Sorry Day Committee**

**Responses by the Government and Opposition
Main Committee Room, Parliament House, Canberra
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“Nobody listened to our mother’s stories. They took them to their graves. Six of us were put in the back of a truck, and told, ‘We are taking you into Alice Springs for shopping.’ We went to the Tiwi islands. Fifty-three years later we returned, with nothing in our hands. Our mothers and fathers weren’t there to meet us. How much longer is this going to carry on? I’m getting old. Will I take my story to the grave?”

Marita Ah Chee, Parliament House, Canberra, November 2002

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SECTION 1

Introduction

All Australians would like to see a full-hearted response to one of the darkest stains on the historical record of our nation. We all wish to redress the grief and hurt of the stolen generations revealed in *Bringing Them Home*, the findings and recommendations of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families.

The National Sorry Day Committee believes that as a nation we have not yet adequately assisted the stolen generations in their journey to recovery and health. This is a challenge for Governments and the Australian community alike. The energy and spirit so evident following the release of *Bringing Them Home* gives hope that if the Government will give leadership, the community will respond.

The National Sorry Day Committee is determined to achieve outcomes for the stolen generations that the hundreds of thousands of Australians who walked on bridges and signed their names in Sorry Books were clearly endorsing. Australia still needs to bring the stolen generations home: home to their families and communities; home to their sense of self worth and pride in their identity; home to their culture and history; home to peace and acceptance.

SECTION 2

The National Sorry Day Committee and the Journey of Healing

One recommendation of *Bringing Them Home* was that a “Sorry Day” be held annually to commemorate Indigenous Australians taken from their families and communities. The Report had suggested that the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR) organise such a day but no commemoration was planned. Following an initial meeting in Melbourne some thirty people, representing both Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations, gathered in Sydney in January 1998 and decided to initiate a Sorry Day on a community basis. They chose 26th May as the day – the anniversary of the tabling of *Bringing Them Home* in Federal Parliament.

The National Sorry Day Committee was established at the meeting, and Sorry Day Committees gradually came into being in each State. A network of local and regional groups and individuals across Australia came together in support of the Committees.

The National Sorry Day Committee (NSDC) took as its aims:

- To organise appropriate events to mark the anniversary of Sorry Day
- To encourage Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians to work for recognition and justice both for Indigenous people forcibly removed from their families as children, and for their families and communities.
- To monitor and lobby for the implementation of the recommendations of *Bringing Them Home*, including those related to the separation of Indigenous children today
- To assist the process of healing among those who were forcibly removed, their families, the Indigenous community and the wider community
- To educate the general community on the history and continuing effects of policies of forcible removal

In the lead up to the first Sorry Day the NSDC helped promote the Sorry Book campaign. Several thousand Sorry Books were circulated around the nation and up to a million people signed them. Many wrote personal statements of sorrow for the taking of children. On the first Sorry Day in 1998 Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians came together in hundreds of events across the country in an expression of sorrow and apology for the cruel and misguided policies which had seen families torn apart, causing immense suffering.

For the first time, many of the stolen generations felt the wider community understood what they had gone through. Deeply moved by this, Indigenous members of the NSDC proposed that the whole community be invited to take part in a Journey of Healing to heal the wounds resulting from the forced removal policies. Meeting with wide support, the Journey of Healing was launched at a ceremony conducted by the Mutitjulu people of Uluru to which they invited members of the stolen generations and non-Indigenous “ambassadors” from every State and Territory.

Since then communities have organised a multitude of Journey of Healing events focused on families and communities, on parents and children, on city and country, designed to promote healing for the harm and hurt associated with the taking of

Indigenous children. Each year there are hundreds of ceremonies, events and activities on Sorry Day itself and in the weeks leading up to it.

The NSDC networks are unique. They are made up of volunteers that include members of the stolen generations, groups representing them and a wide range of organisations supportive of Indigenous Australians. In NSW, for example, Committee members are also members of organizations such as:

- The Kinchela Boys Home Incorporation – made up of past residents of Kinchela Boys Home stolen from their families before they were boys of nine or ten years
- Jarrah – an organisation of past residents of Cootamundra Girls Home stolen from their families as babies or as young girls
- Link Up NSW – the first Link Up, founded in 1980 to assist in the restoration of removed children with their families
- The Aboriginal Medical Service, experienced in the delivery of medical support, counselling and family support services for Indigenous people.
- The Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR) organisation, Australia's largest non-Indigenous support organisation.

In every state members of the Sorry Day/Journey of Healing Committees include stolen generation people who grew up in institutions or with foster families.

In its submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Federal Government's Implementation of Recommendations Made by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in *Bringing Them Home* (2000), the NSDC argued for a single statutory authority coordinating Government responses to the grievances of Indigenous Australians affected by the removal of children.

In 2000 the NSDC conducted a series of consultations around the nation, in association with the Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC), seeking the views of stolen generations people on the question of reparations.

This year the Federal Government commissioned the NSDC and the State Sorry Day Committees to consult stolen generation people around Australia, and others involved in the forced removal experience, about the commemoration of this experience which will be created in the Parliamentary Triangle in Canberra.

As part of its work the National Sorry Day Committee monitors the implementation of the recommendations of *Bringing Them Home*.

SECTION 3

The Stolen Generations

Who are the stolen generations?

The term “stolen generations” was coined by the Canberra-based historian Peter Read. Through his research, Read became aware of the large numbers of Indigenous children removed from their families and communities through much of the twentieth century, many in ways which could only be described as stolen or kidnapped. Other terms have also been adopted as investigation into the practice of removal has proceeded. *Bringing Them Home* uses “forcible removal policies” to identify the authority under which children were removed illegally or through “compulsion, duress or undue influence”.

Australia’s official approach to Indigenous people moved from an early period of segregation, through a period of protectionism – where the Indigenous population was moved to reserves or missions controlled by white officials – to an era of assimilation in which Aboriginal Australians were to be merged and to disappear within the general population. Child separation policies and practices of the time became tools for the assimilation of Indigenous children.

In the twentieth century tens of thousands of indigenous children were removed from their families to be raised in institutions, or by foster parents. Proportional to their population, far more Indigenous children were removed than white children. Sometimes the reason for removal was simply “for being Aboriginal”. Indigenous families and communities were terrified of “welfare” and their powers of removal. There was an intimidating imbalance in the power relationship between the Aboriginal Welfare Board officers who removed children and the families from whom they were removed.

Children were sometimes taken when parents were absent. State Welfare officers assisted by police took several children who are now Sorry Day Committee members from their school or on their way home from school. They simply one day never returned home. One of the Sorry Day Committee was taken when her father was away working as a shearer and her mother was appearing at a Welfare Board hearing concerning the removal of a close relative.

Other Committee members include those taken to “have a holiday”. The police who took them promised their parents they would be returned to their families after a short period away. Others were taken for schooling with a promise they would be returned each holidays. Some saw their parents only thirty years later. Sorry Day Committee members recall being rolled in the ashes of the fire when Aboriginal Welfare Board officers were approaching so that their lighter skin shade would be disguised. Others recount being hidden in their mother’s skirts or placed inside potato sacks. One Committee Member was taken, along with four siblings, when his father was serving in Australia’s expeditionary, armed forces in the Second World War. The father had himself been taken as a child from his family when his own father was fighting as an Australian soldier in France in the First World War.

Why were Indigenous children taken from family?

Aboriginal people have been taken since the earliest days of the colony, but the practice became more widespread in the early years of the twentieth century. By then it was generally believed that the numbers of children of black/white mixed parentage were growing. Australian Governments became alarmed at a prospect that could not be reconciled with the white Australia policy. Their answer was to produce a servant class of Indigenous girls as house-maids and Indigenous boys as farm-hands, socialized into white ways. These Indigenous children could be made useful and, after several generations, would lose all trace of Aboriginality.

In NSW the 1905 Neglected Childrens and Juvenile Offenders Act and the 1901 Apprentices Act were used to remove children of Aboriginal descent. After removal, administrators treated such children as though they had no Aboriginal ancestry. Children of Aboriginal descent, who might clearly today identify themselves as Indigenous, were lost to their families and communities through these procedures.

In 1911 the Annual Report of the Aboriginal Protection Board reported that, “the only chance these [half-caste] children have is to be taken from their present environment and properly trained by earnest workers before being apprenticed out.” The Report stated that the children “should never be allowed to return to [their homes on reserves] permanently.” Churches became involved in housing and preparing Indigenous children for their future roles in white society.

From 1916 onwards in NSW, State officials could take the children of “any aborigine” from their family. All that was required was a belief that the removal was in the best interests of the child’s moral or physical welfare. Usually children of mixed inheritance were taken – typically children with an Indigenous mother and a father of European origin. The Annual Report of the NSW Aboriginal Welfare Board for 1921 claimed, “the continuation of this policy of dissociating children from camp life must eventually solve the Aboriginal problem.”

In 1937, at the Canberra Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities, A O Neville, Western Australia’s Protector of Aborigines, outlined his State’s policy of discouraging part-Aboriginal girls from marrying full-blood Aborigines, and condoning their sexual liaisons with white males. “If a girl comes back pregnant our rule is to keep her for two years,” he said. “The child is then taken away from the mother and sometimes never sees her again. Thus these children grow up as whites, knowing nothing of their own environment. At the expiration of a period of two years the mother goes back into service, so it really does not matter if she has half a dozen children.”

‘Full-bloods’ were thought to be dying out, and the Conference saw no reason to slow this process, resolving that no government assistance go to missions which served full-bloods. For “natives of aboriginal origin, but not the full bloods”, the Conference adopted a policy of “ultimate absorption... by the people of the Commonwealth.”

The Second World War prevented the immediate implementation of this policy, but greater numbers of children were taken from that time on and, because the institutions could not cope with the numbers, fostering into white families was used increasingly.

How many Indigenous children were taken?

There are immense difficulties in estimating the number of children taken. Many records have been lost and, in many cases, no records were kept. Early in the twentieth century only those of full Aboriginal inheritance were defined as Aboriginal, so many of those removed were not so identified; in fact the administrative procedure deliberately attempted to remove a person's Aboriginal identity. And since anyone who acknowledged Aboriginality put their children at risk of removal, many people of mixed Aboriginal and white heritage co-operated in this.

Peter Read, in a 1989 paper, estimated that, in the period 1910 to 1970, 10,000 Indigenous people "did not know their families or communities" as a result of their removal. In 1994 the Australian Bureau of Statistics conducted a survey of Indigenous people aged 25 years and over. About 17,000 stated that they had been removed, 4,500 of them after 1970. Robert Manne, a social historian, used this survey as a basis for estimating that 20,000 to 25,000 Indigenous children were removed between 1910 and 1970. *Bringing Them Home* estimated the number of removals as between one in ten and one in three, and investigations since then tend towards the lower end of this estimate. A proportion of these removals would have been for legitimate welfare reasons but that raises further problems, since "neglect" was widely stated as a reason for removal, even when there was no neglect.

Senator John Herron, then Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs stated that, since only about 10% of Indigenous children were removed, and some of those for legitimate reasons, "there never was a stolen generation." The distress caused by that claim, made with Government authority to a Senate Inquiry, was considerable. This was only one among numerous statements from Government leaders who, in seeming to minimise the traumatic impact of being taken, caused immense distress.

Today people frequently contact Link Up who are only now able to admit that they were removed, and want to search for their family. Some have never identified as Indigenous, but have discovered, that, say, their grandmother was removed from an Aboriginal mission or reserve as a child. The grandmother may have later married a white man and have deliberately submerged her Indigenous identity. She may not have been registered anywhere as Indigenous but the present day family now wishes to follow the hints and clues to rescue their Indigenous past.

Peter Read suggests that only through historians working closely with Indigenous communities, and building a picture of families over generations, will a more definite figure emerge. His work among the Wiradjuri people shows that this can be done.

The results of being taken from family

The experience of being taken from family was traumatic. It delivered loneliness, dislocation, deprivation of affection and love, stress and grief. It resulted in deep depression, losses of identity, of culture, of language, of history, of family and of community and caused deep psychological harm and, in many cases, mental illness. Stolen generations children were deprived of family life and, in turn, many were unable to parent their own children successfully. Stolen generations people talk of

never knowing a mother's love. Of never being hugged or comforted by a father, brother or sister. Of growing up never receiving an affectionate kiss. Indigenous men of 60 years or more break down and weep when telling of the deep, deep deprivation and inconsolable grief caused by the loss of motherly affection when they were infants and boys growing up in an institution. It is impossible for those listening to their story not to weep with them.

For many, a double dispossession has resulted from their being taken. Many have grown up in institutions on the lands of other Indigenous peoples. Upon leaving, those who had lost contact with their family have often remained nearby. Not being part of the local Indigenous people, they are excluded from land claims and a share in land purchases bought from community funds or land purchase grants. Because of their loss of family, community and culture, they have been unable to claim rights such as native title in their home country. Even if they do discover their family, they do not know the culturally appropriate ways of behaving, and their journey from outsider to an accepted community member is often long and painful. Many feel that their only real family is the group with whom they shared life in an institution.

The rhetoric and reality of removal

There were extraordinary contradictions between the stated aims of the removal policies and the actual outcomes.

Many children were removed with the promise that they would receive an education whilst, for others, non-attendance at school was the stated reason for removal. At least one study has shown a dramatic decline in educational achievement after removal (Read, 1999 p173). As they were being trained for servitude, the children rarely received a challenging educational experience and many left the homes barely literate, thereby crippling their chances of gainful employment.

Others taken because of "parental neglect" or because they were said to be abused were placed in institutions in which they were physically, emotionally, sexually, psychologically and culturally abused and in which significant numbers died.

The story of one stolen person, Valerie Linow of NSW, illustrates this contradiction. Of her siblings taken with her, a younger sister died in Bomaderry Infants Home and an older brother died whilst in Kinchela Boys Home. This begs the question about the quality of "care" received when taken from their parents. When Valerie was later placed in domestic service after leaving the Girl's Home she was subjected to thrashings with barbed wire and to repeated rapes. In 2002 the NSW Victims' Compensation Tribunal awarded Valerie \$35,000 as compensation for these sexual assaults, making her the first stolen generations person to receive compensation for treatment while under State care. She was fortunate that she had managed to obtain letters written by the police and the Aborigines Welfare Board at the time, which convinced the judges. Many others endured similar experiences but have no documents. In the institutions in which she grew up Valerie was taught that Indigenous people were bad and harmful and Indigenous culture was to be shunned. Later she realised she had been taught a lie. But it was a difficult re-education.

The authorities stated that, by removing Indigenous children, their lives would be improved. In fact, it has created individuals lacking identity, desperately in need of help, and fractured families and communities. “The ultimate legacy, beyond the loss of identity,” wrote Peter Read, “is three generations almost crippled as functioning and useful human beings.”

As Sir Ronald Wilson, Co-Chair of the Inquiry, expressed to an overflow audience in Old Parliament House, Canberra in October 1997: “Children were removed because the Aboriginal race was seen as an embarrassment to white Australia. The aim was to strip the children of their Aboriginality and accustom them to live in a white Australia. The tragedy was compounded when the children as they grew up, encountered the racism which shaped the policy and found themselves rejected by the very society for which they were being prepared.”

The stolen generations are different

The stolen generations are a separate group within the Indigenous population, having experiences, losses and outcomes for life that most Indigenous people have not had. The circumstances, policies and practices they encountered varied widely. Simple inter-State differences have created differing removal experiences. In Queensland, for example, many children were separated from their families, and put into dormitories, but their parents lived nearby. This meant that these families could maintain some contact with their removed children. In NSW, however, the placement of children in Cootamundra or Bomaderry homes made it very difficult for their families to maintain contact, particularly as dark-skinned relatives – including parents – were often refused permission to visit the homes.

Some stolen children were punished for speaking their home language and language was lost. Others were taken from communities that had already lost their language. Some were placed in institutions or foster homes with their siblings. Others were deliberately separated. Some retained memory of family and were able to return soon after release from an institution or, if fostered, after turning 18 years of age. Others lost their identity entirely. Even those who had some idea of family, community or country often could not return on their own resources and needed support and assistance to search. Many stolen children were surprised to learn as adults they had a family. Such knowledge often came from acquaintances made when, upon release from an institution, they went to live amongst Indigenous people in a place such as Redfern or the Valley. Still today, the stolen generations are meeting brothers or sisters whom they never knew existed.

Decades of forced removal has totally disconnected thousands from land and culture and left others with the most tenuous of connections. It has denied them their identity. People of the stolen generations are, therefore, different. Their needs are different. The services provided for them must differ from those available to the mainstream Indigenous population in order to properly reflect these differences. And within the stolen generations needs also differ. Any programs of restitution or rehabilitation for stolen people need to be capable of great flexibility.

SECTION 4

Bringing Them Home and its Recommendations

The Inquiry

The Australian practice of separating Indigenous children from their family was examined formally by Commissioners appointed in 1995 by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission. This followed a request of the then Attorney General, Michael Lavarch MP, to conduct a National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families. The investigation was constituted as an inquiry with limited budget, relying on voluntary witnesses to appear before it rather than as a Royal Commission with its ability to compel evidence. The inquiry reviewed the laws and regulations under which removals had occurred, determined their impact, considered what might be done to redress the losses, and considered how present day policies and practices regarding the welfare of Indigenous children might require change.

The Inquiry also investigated departmental, church and institutional records, it considered Parliamentary speeches, conference papers and talks, and formal inter-Government meetings. It took oral testimony from government officers and church authorities. But, perhaps, the most compelling evidence came from those who had been taken. At sittings of the Inquiry, all over Australia, 535 stolen generations people spoke of their pain, losses, feelings of abandonment and suffering.

These outpourings of grief often had a cathartic and healing effect. An audience that listened with respect, understanding and empathy allowed some of the teller's pain to be dissipated. Sharing held a promise of some healing. It called for a sensitive response by a listening nation which would honour the courage of the telling and the trauma revealed.

The Inquiry revealed that Indigenous children had been taken throughout most of the twentieth century. It revealed that Governments had a role in racially discriminatory practices to the extent that they created "a gross violation of human rights." It revealed that such practices had produced trauma and grief for individuals and devastation for families and communities. It revealed that the impact of the taking of children was reverberating down the generations.

The Inquiry also revealed the immense cost to the families and communities from whom the children were removed. The grief was, for many parents, siblings and extended family members, debilitating. Whole communities were devastated for alongside the emotional trauma was the culturally disastrous effect of losing many who would have carried on the traditions of the community, learning its language, history and practices and taking increasing responsibility for cultural maintenance.

The Inquiry released its report in May 1997. Whilst there had been some knowledge of the practices of removal amongst better-informed Australians, the racist nature of what had occurred and the terrible price wreaked upon Indigenous people came as a shock to the broader community. The then Leader of the Opposition, the Hon Kim Beazley, speaking in Parliament, was reduced to tears as he recounted spending the

previous night reading the compelling, first hand testimonies recorded in the report. The single most frequent response by the general Australian population to *Bringing Them Home* was, “Sorry”, often followed by, “Why weren’t we told?”

The *Bringing Them Home* recommendations

Bringing Them Home contained 54 main recommendations on acknowledgement and apology, guarantees against repetition, restitution measures, and rehabilitation measures. They were addressed to Governments at all levels and to groups involved in the practices such as churches. Taking into account all sub-clauses in a recommendation there were, in fact, 83 recommendations. Sixty called for action by the Federal Government; 57 by State and Territory Governments; 18 by Churches; 12 by the Council of Australian Governments; 10 by Local Government (Councils and Shires); and 6 by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC).

Stolen generations people still hold great expectations following the Inquiry and the release of its report. Large numbers had volunteered as witnesses, often at great cost to their own peace of mind and emotional stability. They expected that the findings and recommendations of the Inquiry would motivate a generous response.

This is not to suggest the report was perfect. Robert Manne points out that it fails to distinguish adequately “between the pre-war eugenicist and the post-war assimilationist chapters of child removal”. When a Senate Committee, in 2000, inquired into the implementation of the report’s recommendations, it identified a lack of distinction between removals described in the report as “forcible” and other removals. Their report *Healing: A Legacy of Generations* also points out the difficulty of establishing a direct relationship between a particular recommendation of *Bringing Them Home* and a specific target population. The report did, however, conclude that, given its slim resources, the original Inquiry had fulfilled its objectives, and its broad conclusions and inclusive terminology were justified.

The National Sorry Day Committee understands that the *Bringing Them Home* Commissioners were attempting an extraordinarily complex task with minimal resources. The Committee agrees with the report’s findings that many of the removals, ostensibly for reasons of welfare, were racially motivated. Without the Inquiry, stolen generations people would have remained victims of a terrible past. With the report, many of them have been able to begin a journey towards wholeness, identity and health. They look to the Government for help in completing that journey.

The National Sorry Day Committee wishes to help in this. In this report, it presents

- a review of the Federal Government response to *Bringing Them Home*.
- a review of the findings of Healing: a Legacy of Generations: the Senate Inquiry into the Federal Government’s Implementation of Recommendations Made by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in *Bringing Them Home* including the Minority Report by the Australian Democrats and the Dissenting Report of Government Senators
- a report of how the stolen generations community across Australia views the implementation of the recommendations

SECTION 5

The Response of the Federal Government

The Federal Government set aside \$63 million, over the four-year period 1998-2001, to address the needs revealed in *Bringing Them Home*. \$34 million was devoted to mental health counselling, \$11.25 million was for family reunion services, \$5.9 million was to be spent on parenting support programs, \$9 million had already been allocated to support Indigenous languages and culture, and there were small additional sums for archiving, preservation of records and oral history recordings.

In the four-year period commencing in 2002 the Federal Government has allocated an additional \$54 million to continue many of these programs. A lesser sum is needed currently, it explains, because the oral history project has been completed and infrastructure expenditure on such things as computer systems, vehicles and office set-up was a one-off cost.

The response of the Federal Government was directed to only 17 of *Bringing Them Home*'s 54 recommendations – mainly those dealing with rehabilitation, mental health and family reunion. Some attention was paid to records and languages. Most recommendations received no attention including those dealing with apology and reparations.

The failure of the Federal Government to respond to so many of the recommendations has been a serious disappointment. Whilst welcoming the response that has been made, members of the stolen generations remain bewildered and hurt at the lack of commitment which they believe indicates a reluctance to accept as truth what they have revealed of their experiences.

How decisions were made about the programs selected is not clear. The Government pointed out, to the Senate Inquiry, that *Bringing Them Home* itself emphasized the critical importance of family reunion, counselling and parenting. The Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH), in their submission, claimed that the nature and funding of the Federal response to *Bringing Them Home* were totally determined by the Government. Consultation with Indigenous organizations or people appears limited. No stolen generations' organization known to the NSDC reports any involvement in these decision-making processes.

In 2002 funding of more than \$600,000 from within the \$54 million allocated was announced for "The Bringing Then Home Innovative Projects Program". Eighteen projects spread across five States were selected for funding and additional projects in other States are being considered. In contrast to decisions about the initial \$63 million and the later \$54 million, stolen generations people were involved in the development of the projects selected.

Acknowledgement and Apology

The Government has expressed the view that forced removals of children, having been sanctioned by the laws of the time, were carried out in a belief that they were in the best interests of the child. This view has been maintained even when the *Bringing Them Home* Inquiry showed that, overwhelmingly, removal had seriously injured the child, its family and community. The Prime Minister has indicated that an apology could implicate the present Government. The Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs at the time of *Bringing Them Home*'s release said on several occasions that he did not believe that the present generation of Australians should be asked to bear the guilt for the actions of past generations nor lay themselves open to compensation claims.

Nevertheless the Prime Minister moved a motion of reconciliation in Federal Parliament which was supported by an Indigenous Senator, Aden Ridgeway. The motion stated, “[this House] acknowledges that the mistreatment of many Indigenous Australians over a significant period represents the most blemished chapter in our history” and went on to say, “[this House] expresses its deep and sincere regret that Indigenous Australians suffered injustices under the practices of past generations and for the hurt and trauma that many Indigenous people continue to feel as a consequence of those practices”. Stolen generations people noticed that the motion did not mention the removal of children amongst the practices of the past and avoided mentioning that past practices were the result of laws passed by Australian Parliaments. Stolen generations people also noted that the motion did not offer an apology nor the word “Sorry”.

Mental Health

There were two elements to the response addressing mental health needs: the funding of additional Regional Centres and the provision of counselling staff.

1) Regional Centres

\$17 million was set aside for funding of Regional Health Centres.

In an earlier project, under the 1996 Mental Health Action Plan of the Federal Department of Health and Aged Care, 11 Regional Centres had been set up, and a budget of \$20.5 million set aside to fund them over a four year period. Mental health counselling had been seen as a major need in the general Indigenous population, many of whom suffer the consequences of acute economic and social deprivation.

Following the identification in *Bringing Them Home* of the needs of forcibly removed people, an additional four Centres were funded. The Government states that they were located with regard to “demographic data” but the way in which such data influenced location has not been explained. No stolen generations’ organisation was involved in the decision.

These Centres were not service delivery centres directed at a client base. They were aimed at developing an Indigenous mental health workforce through the development of mental health curricula, and the development and delivery of educational and

training courses for Indigenous mental health workers. Graduates would become the Mental Health Counsellors for Indigenous people and for those identified by *Bringing Them Home*. The Government decided that the four new Centres would continue to be administered by the Federal Department of Health and Aged Care.

Centres locations are: Sydney, NSW; Armidale, NSW; Wagga Wagga, NSW; Melbourne, Vic; Brisbane, Q'land; Cairns, Q'land; Rockhampton, Q'land; Mt Isa, Q'land; Adelaide, Sth Aust; Perth, WA; Broome, WA; Kalgoorlie, WA; Darwin, NT; Alice Springs, NT; Hobart, Tas.

2) Mental Health Counsellors

Mental Health Counsellor positions were created at a cost of \$16 million for the initial four-year funding period. The positions were located in community controlled health centres following consultation with OATSIH and NACCHO. There was no consultation with stolen generations individuals or organisations. No evidence was sought as to whether stolen generations people accessed the centres chosen.

Counsellor positions as tabled in the Senate (2001) were spread around the States with:

8 positions in the NT

8 positions in SA

10 positions in Q'land

13 positions in WA

2 positions in Tas

1 position in ACT

18 positions in NSW

Victoria buys in the equivalent of 9 counsellors

Generally, recruitment and appointment for these positions are under the control of the community in which the counsellor is located, resulting in variations in appointments. Some communities have appointed stolen generation people to the positions believing that only those who have experienced removal could understand the clients; whilst other communities have appointed people who were not removed. At a guess, about half the counsellors are non-Indigenous. Some communities have appointed experienced counsellors while other communities have preferred to appoint people with no counselling training or experience but with "the right attitudes". The counsellor positions are appointments in the health centre and the counsellor's work is under the direction and supervision of the health centre manager, some of whom encourage the counsellors to concentrate on stolen generations people while some do not. One counsellor reports that he worked for over a year before he was told the funding for his position came from the *Bringing Them Home* funds.

A variation to this model occurs in Victoria where, rather than appointing counsellors for such specialized services, counsellor time is bought from other providers.

Parenting and Family Support Services

Witnesses at the Inquiry into the Separation of Children from Family recounted that they had difficulty as parents themselves in bonding with and parenting their own children. The Federal Government allocated \$5.9 million to fund parenting and family well being programs. Originally these programs were located in the Department of Health and Aged Care but have since been transferred into the Department of Family and Community Services. This shift has apparently slowed the rate of establishing programmes. Family Well Being programs had been established well before the release of *Bringing Them Home* and it appears that preference has been given to programs already in existence.

Family Reunion Services

Link Ups attempt to trace their client's family principally through the skilled searching of records. If they find the family, they provide travel, accommodation and personal support in bringing the client and the family together.

The original family reunion service was Link-Up, founded in 1980 in NSW. Adopting this as a model the Federal Government provided \$11.2 million for a four year period to provide a Link-Up service in every State and the Northern Territory.

In an earlier estimate, Link-Up NSW stated that delivery of service to a single client costs between \$5000 and \$8000. So the Federal funds should have enabled Link-Ups nationally to service between 350 and 560 clients annually. They have actually been doing much better than that, but at heavy cost to their staff.

Link Ups generally provide a service for all removed Indigenous people, not only members of the stolen generations. Several State Link Ups try also to assist the children and grandchildren of those who were removed to establish links to families lost to them for several generations. This extension of Link Up services beyond those originally removed is a contentious issue in several States.

Link Ups are assisted by a *Bringing Them Home* Task Force located in ATSIC which provides training, co-ordinating and facilitating services for all Link Ups. The Task Force also conducted the original assessments of the Link Up services which led to the setting up of Link Ups in South Australia, Western Australia and the NT. The majority of Link Up services follow a similar model in which each State Link Up is an independent body responsible for delivery of family tracing and re-union services in a particular geographical territory. The Western Australia Link Up service, on the other hand, was set up following the establishment of an ATSIC Memorandum of Understanding with the WA State Department of Health.

Most State Link Ups have a single office. However the Queensland Link Up service, whose one office was in Brisbane, has recently opened an office in Cairns to service large numbers of stolen generations people in that region. In Western Australia the Link Up service has been established in Department of Health offices in seven locations across the State. Some State Link Ups have created outreach services to supply contact points across their State.

The Oral History Project

Bringing Them Home suggested that Indigenous people who had been removed should be given an opportunity to be recorded. The National Library received \$1.6 million to undertake this program, and was requested by the Minister to include non-Indigenous people who had been involved with the stolen generations, such as staff from institutions, police officers and Aboriginal Welfare Board officers, in the project. The funds have now been expended. Over 300 stories have been audio taped and form the basis for a book, *Many Voices*. Carol Kendall, inaugural chair of the National Sorry Day Committee, served on the Steering Committee for the project. The National Library may have been chosen because of their previous experience and expertise but Indigenous bodies were not consulted or considered for the project.

Language and Culture Projects

\$9 million was made available by simply transferring money already in the ATSIC budget for language projects, and re-badging it as *Bringing Them Home* money. ATSIC retained control of these projects. Funds have found their way to projects directed towards language revival and maintenance rather than to cultural projects.

The funds provided for 51 community based language projects in 5 priority areas under the Language Access Initiative Program (LAIP) conducted by ATSIC. 14 Projects are located in the Northern Territory, 10 in Western Australia; 12 in NSW; 10 in Q'land; 3 in SA; 1 in Tas; and, 1 in Vic. There are 2 national projects.

No research has been carried out to discover whether these projects accord with the wishes of stolen generations people.

Records Projects

In their search for identity and meaning in their lives, records are vital to the stolen generations. Records will allow them to trace family. Records will explain how and under what conditions they were taken. Records will show what might have happened to their siblings. Records might show whether they have any Indigenous inheritance in the first place. *Bringing Them Home* recognized the importance of records and made several recommendations regarding them.

In the Federal Government response funds were granted for projects indexing and copying materials held in the National Archives, which was also given responsibility for creating a National Records Taskforce, for ensuring access to records and for training archivists which should include Indigenous people. The Federal Government also placed restrictions on the destruction of records.

SECTION 6A

What has been achieved?

The Senate Inquiry *Healing: A Legacy of Generations*

In September 1999 the Senate asked its Legal and Constitutional References Committee to conduct an inquiry into the implementation of the recommendations of *Bringing Them Home*. The inquiry was asked to determine, amongst other matters: whether the Government's response had been adequate and effective; ways for governments to establish an alternative disputes resolution tribunal; ways for the Government to set up adequately funded mechanisms for counselling and recording testimonies of the stolen generations; effective ways of implementing the recommendations; and, the consistency of the Government's response with the hopes, aspirations and needs of the stolen generations and their descendants.

The Inquiry commenced in December 1999 and concluded in May 2000. Some 147 submissions were received. Initially three States did not take part whilst three simply re-labeled and submitted their responses to the *Bringing Them Home* Inquiry. However, several States responded more fully late in the life of the Inquiry.

The Senate Committee reported on the limited nature of the data and evidence that the Government Departments and the States were able to bring to its Inquiry. The report states that it was "believed that the lack of effective co-ordination and monitoring of implementation had resulted in a shortage of accurate and up to date information and of data on the evaluation of programs." The Inquiry found itself relying on data in the MCATSIA 1999 status report on State responses to *Bringing Them Home* and to the Sixth Report of the Social Justice Commissioner from HREOC of 1998.

The information provided to the Inquiry by the Department of Family and Community Services was, in the words of the Inquiry report, "sparse". However, ATSIC provided a full submission as did the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH) in the Department of Health and Aged Care. HREOC produced a "thorough" submission.

In assessing the Government responses, the Inquiry looked at:

- i) Funding source: was the funding provided to a program in fact new funding or funds already committed and simply redirected and re-badged as *Bringing Them Home* funds?
- ii) Consultation: *Bringing Them Home* had recommended that initiatives should only be undertaken following consultation with Indigenous people and their representative bodies. Were the stolen generations involved?
- iii) Target: who were the recipients for each service? *Bringing Them Home* had indicated needs at the level of individuals, families and communities.

- iv) Source of program: were the programs newly constructed with the stolen generations in mind or were the programs already in existence. If pre-existing, what work had been undertaken to ensure that the program met the needs of the target populations; there was no automatic opposition to the redesign of existing programs, but there needed to be a convincing argument that programs were not being generalized to the stolen generations populations simply because that was easy to do.
- v) Effectiveness: what were the results of any assessment and evaluation activities that had taken place in regard to services and programs funded under the *Bringing Them Home* label?

An analysis of the Inquiry’s three reports revealed the following to the NSDC:

Table 1: The Federal Government’s response to *Bringing Them Home*

Service or Program	Characteristic	Comment from Inquiry
Mental Health: Regional Centres	Source of funds	The Mental Health Regional Centres Program had commenced well before <i>Bringing Them Home</i> was tabled. The existing program, the Mental Health Action Plan, was expanded with <i>Bringing Them Home</i> funds to include four Centres in addition to the 11 already in existence. The funds were newly supplied.
	Consultation	The Inquiry was critical of the “limited” consultation; some Indigenous bodies were involved but “these did not appear to include stolen generations organizations”; the Inquiry could not discover any relationship between the Centre locations and the places where sizeable numbers of stolen generations live
	Target	The Inquiry found that neither the Department of Health and Aged Care nor OATSIH could explain how stolen generations populations would be best served by the Regional Centres
	Source of program	The Centres were set up to develop Indigenous mental health workers; this aim did not change to accommodate the <i>Bringing Them Home</i> recommendations
	Effectiveness	The inquiry does not report any evidence as to effectiveness of the Regional Centres program

Mental Health: Counsellor Positions	Source of funds	The \$16 million was new money provided by the Federal Government under its commitment to the <i>Bringing Them Home</i> recommendations
	Consultation	Indigenous community groups were consulted about these counsellor positions; but the Inquiry reports that stolen generations people in some locations had little relationship with community groups, and in other locations would not reveal stories and problems to community centre staff because of problems with the possibility of records being subpoenaed; OATSIH could not provide data to show that stolen generations people accessed counsellors in health centres in the chosen locations; the Inquiry did not accept the expectation of the Department that stolen generations people were involved in community organizations and therefore were consulted; the Inquiry reports “the [Department’s] measures are not sufficient to ensure a clear and unambiguous allocation of funding to meet specific needs”
	Target	The Inquiry reported advice received from ATSIC that the Department of Health and Aged Care funds would “be used to provide services that are not specifically for stolen generations people” and the Inquiry commented that “if the [OATSIH] decision [in allocation of counsellors] does not represent objectives it should not sign off on it”; the Inquiry noted there was a “risk that services would be directed to groups who have very little connection to removal”; ATSIC submitted that “It seems that these funds will be used to provide services that are not specifically for stolen generations people” and again “this funding is seen as mainly enhancing existing programs which are not exclusively addressing stolen generations people’s issues”
	Source of program	The counselling positions were in addition to positions already existing in community health and all positions were targeted at five areas of need in social well being including holistic primary mental health care; specialized secondary mental health care; trauma, grief and counselling; suicide and self-care; children, young people and family; these areas had been identified before <i>Bringing Them Home</i> ’s release

<p>Mental Health: Counsellor Positions cont'd</p>	<p>Effectiveness</p>	<p>but did include the relevant area, for the stolen generations, of grief counselling</p> <p>OATSIH stated “that sort of information [about stolen generation’s people using the service] is almost impossible to find out”; the Inquiry also reports that performance measures put forward by OATSIH “[did] not include any reference to removed people”; the Inquiry also notes that “the Department’s capacity to evaluate services is therefore unknown”; the Inquiry was concerned at the lack of expertise and/or experience of counsellors and the lack of support for them</p>
<p>Parenting and Family Support</p>	<p>Source of funds Consultation</p> <p>Target</p> <p>Source of Program</p> <p>Effectiveness</p>	<p>New funds supplied by the Federal Government</p> <p>Services funded to provide the programs were community controlled, the preferred placement of programs by OATSIH; no evidence was provided, though, to indicate that stolen generations people were involved in the community organizations although OATSIH indicated that board members of community organizations would “probably be members of the stolen generations too”; this is an assumption which may not be sustained in practice</p> <p>OATSIH provided evidence that the Federal Government funds would be used “to develop a national perspective on parenting issues”; the Inquiry accepted that this may be a useful approach but “remained concerned about the extent to which [this] has much relationship with the needs of removed people”</p> <p>Individual programs were created by community centres funded under this initiative; the Inquiry comments on projects such as adolescent parenting and notes “ the relationship between [adolescent parenting services] and the needs of removed people and their families is not explained”</p> <p>The Inquiry report stated, “The Committee believes there is a strong likelihood of funding being inappropriately allocated”</p>

Family Reunion Services	Source of funds	These funds were provided by the Federal Government to the reunion services; the services had begun in NSW and Queensland and had been funded by donation and grants; after evaluation it was decided to promote a generalization of the service to all states and the NT and to provide Federal funds to them all; \$11.25 million was provided in the first 4 year period and a further \$9.4 million has been provided for the following 4 year period to allow Link Up to carry on its work; the Federal Government stated to the Inquiry that it expected State governments to become involved in the reunion services and to accept some level of responsibility for funding
	Consultation	Reunion services were begun by removed people and had been controlled by them; at least in the case of reunion services there was direct consultation with stolen generations members although there were some submissions to the Inquiry from people who claimed they had been excluded from reunion services and decisions regarding them; Northern Territory stolen generations members argued for services controlled directly by those who were stolen and placed into Institutions
	Target	ATSIC argued to the Inquiry that priority in service delivery should be given to those who were directly affected by past laws and practices; Link Up in NSW and Queensland had always been available to all removed people not only to the stolen generations; some Link Ups have made their services available to those who may not themselves be recognized as Indigenous but are children and grandchildren of Indigenous people and, so, have raised questions as to the provision of services to those who have been assimilated into the general Australian population through social circumstances
	Source of Program	The original models upon which other services were based provided family tracing and reunion services plus a “more general service to people who had lost family”; NSW Link Up has received funding from the NSW Government to provide counselling services; the WA Link Up service has adopted a model which integrates

<p>Family Reunion Services cont'd</p>	<p>Effectiveness</p>	<p>reunion services with mental health counselling; in the NT the government has made counselling services available to those facing stresses created through adoption tracing</p> <p>There was a clear need identified for placement of Link Up services in remote and regional locations and the development of outreach services which, at the time of the Inquiry, were not features of the Tasmanian, NSW and Queensland models; the Inquiry noted there was a limitation to the entry of other groups into providing reunion services which had become limited by the financial monopoly granted to Link Ups; the Inquiry quotes a KPMG report which indicated “that there are some problems in various [Link Up] services” but these are not specified in the Inquiry Report</p>
<p>Oral History Project</p>	<p>Source of funds</p> <p>Consultation</p> <p>Target</p> <p>Source of the Program</p> <p>Effectiveness</p>	<p>The Federal Government provided \$1.6 million to the National Library</p> <p>The National Library appointed a steering committee which included stolen generations people and was reported to have worked well</p> <p>The targets in <i>Bringing Them Home</i> were removed Indigenous people; testimonies from “officials and other non-Indigenous people” were also recorded</p> <p><i>Bringing Them Home</i> saw recording the stories of those removed as part of the healing process; it was thought that some things could only be dealt with when people were able to discuss them; <i>Bringing Them Home</i> also saw such material being available for schools and research</p> <p>The Inquiry reported that for other oral history projects a clearer distinction between materials recorded for personal and confidential reasons and those recorded for reasons such as establishing a historical repository should be made; the Inquiry criticized the extension of the project to include non-Indigenous stories as unnecessary.</p>

Language and Culture	Source of funds	The Inquiry reports, “this was not new funding; it was a transfer of money in the ATSIC budget”
	Consultation	The Inquiry report stated “there appears not to have been any specific consultation on the issue of language and culture funding prior to the Government response” but ATSIC indicated that people already involved in Indigenous language projects were consulted
	Target	According to the ATSIC submission the money was used for language maintenance and revival; ATSIC stressed community need, but did not indicate whether these communities included removed people; funds went to 51 language access projects; no funds were given for cultural projects
	Source of Program	The Language Access Initiative Program was already in place prior to <i>Bringing Them Home</i>
	Effectiveness	There was no evidence of a “relationship between endangered languages and removed populations”; there was no funding of cultural projects which many submissions identified as important
Records	Source of funds	The Federal Government provided all funds to the National Archives
	Consultation	None is recorded in the Inquiry Report
	Target	Records held by National Archives; many records relevant to the stolen generations are held by State and Territory Governments and by Church and secular organizations and are referred to at length in the Inquiry Report; no funds were supplied by the Federal Government to promote access and correct storage and handling of these records
	Source of Program	<i>Bringing Them Home</i> had stressed the importance of records, access to them, their proper care and the involvement of Indigenous persons in any work on record keeping; these were new initiatives
	Effectiveness	The Reports records no judgement of the service

Summary of Analysis

The NSDC analysis of the three Inquiry Reports can be summed in the following way:

- Source of Funds: of the original grant of \$63 million, \$54 million was new funding provided for the Government's response to *Bringing Them Home*; the \$9 million invested in the Language Access Initiative Program was existing funds redirected within ATSIC
- Consultation: there was consultation with stolen generations people only in the Steering Committee of the Oral History Project and in design and management of the Family Reunion program; for the remaining programs there was no evidence of consultation with stolen generations people although evidence was given of consultation with Indigenous organisations
- Target: projects were not targeted directly towards stolen generations people but were available generally for Indigenous people; poor targeting of the largest single sum, \$34 million, in the Mental Health projects was criticised strongly in the major report; the Records project, the Family Reunion project and the Oral History project were targeted more directly to stolen generations people but even those projects contained elements which diffused the impact
- Source of Project: the greatest amounts were spent on projects which had been in existence prior to *Bringing Them Home* and there was little evidence of these projects being redesigned for a specific stolen generations clientele; the Family Reunion and the Oral History project were designed with stolen generation needs in view
- Evaluation: assessment of effectiveness was lacking in all projects

The Senate Inquiry Report concluded on a pessimistic note. It stated, "There are many problems with the extent and nature of the response by the Commonwealth and others. The problems reflect an under-funded and badly directed response [which] ...relates to the Indigenous community in general rather than to the stolen generations." A little later the Inquiry Report states it was "...mindful...that there has been insufficient consultation on a range of issues." Whilst the Dissenting Report of Government Senators argues a different point of view, it does not provide the analyses or evidence of consultation with stolen generations people to sustain its argument.

The National Sorry Day Committee's overview of the Inquiry Reports leads it to similar conclusions. The National Sorry Day Committee agrees with the Senate Committee's recommendation that there be:

- a national apology
- effective consultation with the stolen generations
- implementation of an effective coordinating and monitoring process

SECTION 6B

Responses of the Stolen Generation

The National Sorry Day Committee is in contact with members of the stolen generations widely across the country and constantly attempts to assess through them the effectiveness of programs aimed at healing the wounds resulting from the forced removal policies. In the past two years the NSDC has been involved in two formal consultations with stolen generations groups across the nation. No other organisation has surveyed the views of the stolen generations so extensively. While there is no claim that the NSDC survey information below is comprehensive, it does express the views of several hundred stolen generations people, from every State and Territory, and the Committee sees no reason to doubt that these views are broadly representative.

Table 2: Stolen generations assessments of the services provided by *Bringing Them Home* funding

Federal Program or Service	Comments of the Stolen Generations– State by State
<p>Mental Health: Regional Centres</p>	<p><i>NT</i>: no consultation with stolen generations about the mental health program; no evidence that stolen generations people are being offered training as mental health counsellors; distance and other factors mean that Centres are inaccessible to many of the stolen generations</p> <p><i>South Aust</i>: not generally known about and difficult for many to access; no stolen generations person has received training in mental health counselling at a Centre; no consultation regarding location</p> <p><i>Q'land</i>: little known; no stolen generations person reports having received training at a Centre; no reported involvement in development of curricula or training; no reported consultation regarding location</p> <p><i>WA</i>: the Perth Centre has closed; some stolen generation people have been appointed mental health counsellors, but are given little training</p> <p><i>Tas</i>: access restricted to those who have been accepted by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre; relationships with broader groups of removed people are problematic; no involvement of stolen generation people in training or curricula development</p> <p><i>ACT</i>: there is no Centre in Canberra so ACT based stolen generations people have to access Centres in NSW; there has been no consultation with stolen generations people and</p>

<p>Mental Health: Regional Centres cont'd</p>	<p>they have no information about any Centre; many in the ACT make use of AIATSIS's family history resources and AIATSIS has given some training</p> <p><i>Vic</i>: not well known amongst stolen generations, although some contact reported; no consultation is reported; no involvement of stolen generation people in training or curricula development</p> <p><i>NSW</i>: little known; stolen generations people do not know of training opportunities, are not involved in program development, were not consulted on the Centres' location</p>
<p>Mental Health: Counsellors</p>	<p><i>NT</i>: no co-ordination between counsellors and Link Ups; no consultation with stolen generations people about location of counsellors; counselling positions identified as Indigenous Mental Health positions indicating a focus on all Indigenous people, not specifically stolen generations</p> <p><i>South Aust</i>: few stolen generations people have knowledge of these counsellors; the recent co-location with Link Up South Australia may improve the situation</p> <p><i>Queensland</i>: in some areas stolen generations have contact; observations reported of great variability in experience of counsellors, some are regarded as very useful; stolen generations were not consulted about location of counsellor positions; counsellors have to cover impossibly vast areas, so are unable to service rural and remote regions.</p> <p><i>WA</i>: stolen generations counsellors are instructed to offer their services to all Indigenous people; their location in a mental health service makes stolen generations people reluctant to visit them, as mental illness carries a stigma; counsellors report they are not given conditions of privacy for counselling; few training opportunities for counsellors</p> <p><i>Tas</i>: counsellors are located in the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC) and access is restricted to stolen generations people accepted by TAC; no consultation regarding location by stolen generation people not attending the TAC</p> <p><i>ACT</i>: a counsellor is located with medical service; known as an Emotional Well Being counsellor and is available to any Indigenous person</p> <p><i>Vic</i>: health services can employ stolen generations workers</p>

<p>Mental Health: Counsellors cont'd</p>	<p>or contract in services; many stolen generations people do not know of the counsellors; a stigma is attached to the use of counsellors because they are known as Mental Health Counsellors; local stolen generations people have been offered positions as counsellors, but receive little training</p> <p><i>NSW:</i> counsellors are known to few stolen generations people; a social stigma is attached to an admission that mental health counselling may be needed and their location in health centres reduces their usefulness</p>
<p>Parenting and Family Support</p>	<p><i>NT:</i> no consultation with stolen generations; no information about parenting or family programs received by the three NT stolen generations organizations</p> <p><i>SA:</i> stolen generations generally not heard of any program</p> <p><i>Q'land:</i> very little knowledge of any program</p> <p><i>WA:</i> no knowledge of programs reported, but the need for parenting skills training is immense</p> <p><i>Tas:</i> Federally funded programs generally not known</p> <p><i>ACT:</i> stolen generations know of no parenting programs</p> <p><i>Vic:</i> stolen generations people have expressed a need for parenting programs for a long time; now the State Government has initiated some programs</p> <p><i>NSW:</i> stolen generations generally unaware of the existence of any family or parenting program</p>
<p>Family Reunion Services</p>	<p><i>NT:</i> seen as an excellent service but very limited by the resources available; no coordination with the counsellors; unable to reach many areas of the Territory, even though stolen people are widespread; insufficient resources for full reunion program so return to country is compromised</p> <p><i>South Aust:</i> services are relatively new and as yet little known; overstretched and therefore limited in access, particularly to people in regions; need an outreach program; MOU with Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages has given better access to records and kept costs down</p>

**Family Reunion Services
cont'd**

Q'land: the recent opening of an office in Cairns to supplement the one in Brisbane has increased coverage; additional offices needed in central Queensland; better cooperation with counsellors has come with appointment of a counsellor coordinator alongside Link Up; access to records a problem; need for this service far outstrips the available resources

WA: reunion services are co-located with mental health counsellors in seven locations across the state; little consultation with stolen generations people about their location; rapid turnover of staff; there is a huge need for reunion services but few reunions are being achieved annually; stolen generations people reluctant to access any service located in a mental health facility; many stolen generations people would like Link-Up to be controlled by the stolen generations rather than the communities

Tas: usefulness limited to those accepted by TAC; access to finances for travel vital as many removed from Tasmania to Queensland; mental health counsellor is co-located with the reunion service which is a plus

ACT: there is no Link Up service in the ACT; those seeking reunion have been assisted by Link-Up NSW; the family history section of AIATSIS has helped ACT stolen generations people to trace parts of their ancestry; some are unhappy with the service AIATSIS offers; AIATSIS says it has had a hard struggle financially to keep the section available, but they are determined it will stay.

Vic: Link Up well regarded but under-resourced; under the direction of VACCHO; staff received little training and are now buying in training from private suppliers; high turnover in staff; many clients were removed from the NT or northern WA and costs of reunions very high; clients asked to contribute to reunion costs; an outreach program established and each visit to a region results in tens more clients; service believes the need for reunions will continue to grow not diminish; basic resources, such as guides to record searching, are lacking

NSW: Link Up provides a well regarded service limited by resources; location in Blue Mountains to the west of Sydney provides a difficulty for many to access; needs an outreach service; has a mental health counsellor attached but needs better coordination with mental health counsellors attached to community health centres elsewhere in the State; access to records an ongoing problem

<p>Oral History</p>	<p><i>NT</i>: some interviews were held and recorded; people have heard about the project from newsletters received</p> <p><i>South Aust</i>: project not known amongst stolen generation people generally although 29 stories have been recorded</p> <p><i>Q'land</i>: a few stolen generations have heard about this through newsletters; 57 stories have been recorded</p> <p><i>WA</i>: 29 stories recorded and some stolen generations people have received the newsletter; typically stolen generation people in WA asked for a local service recording stories which would then be controlled locally</p> <p><i>Tas</i>: National Library arranged for Tasmanian stories to be recorded, also arranged for counselling for those whose stories were recorded; well regarded project from Tasmanian point of view; when in Tasmania shared an office with stolen generations so good co-operation</p> <p><i>ACT</i>: some stories recorded and people have been kept informed of the project</p> <p><i>Vic</i>: some stories were recorded but only some stolen generations people know about project from newsletter; several asked for local groups to record and care for stories</p> <p><i>NSW</i>: several stolen generations people were recorded for this project; reasonably well known; stolen generations people from NSW were on Steering Committee; questions arose about access to recordings and their location</p>
<p>Language and Culture</p>	<p><i>NT</i>: no consultation with stolen generations and projects reportedly meet needs of few stolen generations people; over one third of funds for this program went to NT language programs (\$3 mill/\$9 mill); no cultural programs</p> <p><i>South Aust</i>: limited knowledge about any projects; no stolen generations person reported being consulted</p> <p><i>Q'land</i>: some contact between a few language projects and small numbers of stolen generations people; sometimes such contacts have led to cooperation on other matters</p> <p><i>WA</i>: stolen generations generally do not know of these programs and rate cultural programs as a greater need than language programs; no consultation in setting up programs</p>

<p>Language and Culture cont'd</p>	<p><i>Tas</i>: there is a language unit in TAC and the service used for translation purposes; used by whole community</p> <p><i>ACT</i>: there is a language centre which does useful work, of importance for the general Indigenous community as much as for any stolen generations person; the stolen generations were not consulted about the project</p> <p><i>Vic</i>: several language programs are known of but no consultation reported from stolen generations; more demand for cultural programs among stolen generations</p> <p><i>NSW</i>: some stolen generations people involved in language projects; a greater demand for cultural programs but no cultural programs known about; no consultation reported</p>
<p>Records</p>	<p><i>NT</i>: a National Archives Northern Territory Aboriginal Advisory group exists, on which the Central Australian Stolen Generation and Families Aboriginal Corporation and the Northern Territory Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation are both represented</p> <p><i>South Aust</i>: no knowledge of this project was reported</p> <p><i>Q'land</i>: no knowledge of this project was reported</p> <p><i>WA</i>: no knowledge of this project was reported</p> <p><i>Tas</i>: no knowledge of this project was reported</p> <p><i>ACT</i>: stolen generations people have been involved in the project and have received information from time to time</p> <p><i>Vic</i>: a National Archives Victorian Aboriginal Advisory Group has representatives from several Indigenous organizations but none directly representing the stolen generations; the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency is represented and has some communication with Link Up and the Vic Sorry Day Committee; elders and stolen generations have visited the archives and been assisted with access to records</p> <p><i>NSW</i>: no knowledge of this project was reported</p>

Summary of reports on services by stolen generations around Australia to the NSDC

The Central Australian Stolen Generations and Families Aboriginal Corporation has prepared a discussion paper debating the implementation of the Federal Government's response to *Bringing Them Home* in the Northern Territory. Their paper *Where is the \$63 million?* asserts that current services were not developed with the involvement of stolen generations people and do not meet their needs. The Senate Inquiry into implementation came to a similar conclusion.

The National Sorry Day Committee's surveys show that, generally, stolen generations people across Australia consider they:

- have not been sufficiently consulted about decisions that directly affect them
- know little about any program apart from the Link Up organization and in some States even Link Up is not well known
- need the services as identified in *Bringing Them Home*, particularly cultural, counselling and family support, but in the main are not receiving them

Summary of Assessments by the Stolen Generations:

Mental Health Regional Centres: most report a lack of consultation with stolen generations and, to them, Centres appear to have had little impact; there is little awareness of training and less involvement in curriculum development amongst stolen generations although both are recognised as a high priority; availability of culturally appropriate counselling and counsellors is seen by most stolen generations people as an extremely high priority which is not being met

Mental Health Counsellors: generally a lack of consultation about location is reported; counsellor positions often are not identified as Stolen Generations Counsellors and have frequently been assigned to counselling for any Indigenous client; there are too few Indigenous counsellors and, particularly, too few counsellors with a stolen generation background; there are few male counsellors; a high turnover rate in Counselling positions in most States; little evaluation of counselling has been reported; the location of counsellors in Mental Health services leads to many stolen generations people avoiding them because of a fear of being stigmatised as mentally deficient; nevertheless, there is a great need for such services amongst stolen generations and many express the hope for a more widely available, culturally appropriate counselling service.

On the counsellors' side, the demand is far beyond their resources, and people in the regions have little opportunity to access their services. Also, in some States there is a chronic lack of co-operation between Link-Ups and counsellors, and in most States

there is at least a need for closer co-ordination. Some State Link Ups are exploring ways to do this, and in Queensland, for example, where a manager of stolen generations counsellors has recently been appointed alongside Link Up, improvements have already been reported.

Reunion Services: when available these services are highly regarded; limitations imposed by lack of resources have generally limited accessibility and numbers of stolen people who can be assisted at any one time; large numbers who require reunion assistance are not being reached; the newer services are not widely known; outreach services are needed; Link Up staff need considerable support and more effective training and coordination; access to records remains problematic in most States; because of limitations of resources available to Link Up services additional reunion services are being offered by organisations with little background or expertise in assisting family reunions; Link-Ups seem to work most effectively when their governing committee includes stolen generations people

Language and Cultural Programs: lack of consultation reported. While funds have been devoted to Language Access Initiative Projects, most stolen generations people place a higher priority on cultural programs, few of which are available. Some stolen generations people value language revival. But many live far from their original communities, with little opportunity to learn and speak home languages. Learning about their culture, though, is a way in which they can re-establish their roots.

Parenting and Family Support Programs: such programs would be highly valued if generally available and easy to access; however, few stolen generations people know of programs in their area

Oral History Project: those whose stories were recorded appreciated the opportunity; the presence of stolen generations people on the steering committee was appreciated, and those who have seen the final production find it a balanced and valuable resource; generally there was a request for the local recording and management of stories

Records Project: generally little known about but its nature as a technical and professional project limited its relevance to many people; availability of records and access to them remains a major concern to most stolen generations people and to the organizations assisting them

Other issues of importance to the stolen generations

Apology: Members of the stolen generations are certain that what they most want from the Federal Government is “an apology”. Nothing is more important than the Federal Government acknowledging that, no matter what the intentions of those who implemented the policies of removal, the effects for many have been disastrous. These effects have rolled down through generations. There would be an immensely healing

effect from a statement by the Government or the Parliament which said that what happened should not have happened, that it is sorry that such things did happen and that it is committing itself to doing all in its power to address the continuing effects.

Coordination: The HREOC Commissioners, knowing that the program of healing that their Report recommended was complex and difficult to implement, called for coordination and monitoring of Government responses by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). That body did not accept responsibility. HREOC offered itself as a coordinating body. This offer was not accepted. The Ministerial Council of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (MCATSIA) was seen as the relevant body and did accept a role. The evidence suggests, however, that MCATSIA has inadequate resources for the task. The Minority Report by the Australian Democrats called for “an independent auditing body”. Federal Government programs funded from *Bringing Them Home* money are managed by five bodies: the Department of Health and Aged Care, the Department of Family and Community Services, the National Archives, the National Library and ATSIC. Additionally, all State and Territory governments have funded programs. In our research for this document, many people said that there is a great need for improved co-ordination between Federal and State programs. The NSDC seek the establishment of a coordinating and monitoring body.

Consultation: Stolen generations people are often not involved in Indigenous organizations. It cannot be assumed that Indigenous organizations express their views, and other forums are often needed.

Reunion Services: Link Up services are so important in the journey of healing. Despite the dedicated work of Link Up services around the nation, the NSDC surveys suggest that several thousand people, particularly in country and rural areas, would make use of Link Up if they could access it. Greater resources need to be devoted to Link Up services, a larger number of Link Up offices need to be created and extensive Link Up outreach services established.

Link Up staff needs a wide range of skills for which, at present, they have little access to relevant training and education. It might have been expected that the Regional Centres should have by now initiated training. Although their brief included curriculum and training development they haven’t responded to Link Up staff needs. The educational need does exist and the sourcing of training from Universities, AIATSIS, or a newly-created Institute of Aboriginal Health should be investigated.

Access to Link Up services would immediately be improved if those which are located with mental health services were relocated. The stolen generations have no wish to be stigmatised as people with mental problems. They could assist in identifying labels and locations which stolen generations would gladly access.

Records, vital to Link Up work, are often difficult and costly to access and copy. Many removed individuals no longer reside in the State in which they were first removed and Link Up services often find themselves engaged in cross border record searches. National coordination is vital.

Mental Health Services: The evidence of the NSDC surveys, and discussions with stolen generations counsellors, suggest that everywhere the demand for Indigenous mental health counselling far exceeds the resources available. This raises difficult questions. Where should limited resources be directed? Many stolen generations people believe it is wrong that money allocated to their counselling needs in response to *Bringing Them Home* should simply go into general Indigenous counselling, as is happening in some places at present. But many of them are aware of the wider needs for Indigenous counselling. The NSDC believes that these issues can only be resolved through discussion among those responsible for determining how the funds allocated to Indigenous mental health are used, and therefore the stolen generations need to be part of that discussion.

A Reparations Tribunal: The Federal Government has refused to consider any alternative to litigation in the Court system for stolen generations people who seek compensation. There are alternatives, and last year the National Sorry Day Committee was involved with the Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) in carrying out consultations on a Reparations Tribunal throughout Australia. PIAC's recent publication, *Restoring Identity*, sets out the case for a Tribunal. The National Sorry Day Committee stands with the Public Interest Advocacy Centre in its view that a Reparations Tribunal would do much to heal the wounds.

The *Bringing Them Home* Innovative Projects Program: Projects to the value of \$665,000 were recently funded by the Department of Health and Aged Care from within the current \$54 million. In the selection criteria was a requirement that the projects must be a culturally appropriate approach to social and emotional well-being. The stolen generations have been asking for such approaches since *Bringing Them Home*. Amongst the 18 projects partially funded was a six-day workshop for former residents of the Kinchela Boys Home, initiated by the men who spent their boyhood and youth there. The project showed what can be achieved by consultation with stolen generations members and the granting of leadership to them. All the men involved in the Kinchela workshop in Kempsey acknowledged it as the greatest step towards healing they had undertaken. In fact, at the large public gathering celebrating the conclusion of the six days, the men's spokesman claimed, "they had been helped by no other program. They had helped themselves." This new program had promoted healing. For removed men, healing has been particularly difficult. In the past they have demonstrated a reluctance to talk about their experiences and are much less likely to have sought counselling and support. The Government Minister responsible for the program has said, "I am confident [these innovative projects] will go some way towards healing the spiritual and emotional wounds of many of those people affected by past removal practices and policies." The Kinchela project supports her claim.

SECTION 7

Urgent steps towards healing – the NSDC view

Many stolen generations people are nearing the end of their lives. They need support now. The Federal Government has indicated its commitment to them by funding important support programs. Whilst the NSDC recognises the difficulty of tailoring resources to meet the needs of the stolen generations, we believe that, given goodwill, many improvements are possible. Cross government and cross-sectoral programs are difficult. However the public service, with its commitment to “whole of government” and “best practice” services, may be ready to accept the challenge of supporting people who are in need as a result of laws and regulations of the recent past.

The experience of being taken from family was traumatic. It delivered loneliness, dislocation, deprivation of affection and love, stress and grief. It resulted in deep depression, losses of identity, of culture, of language, of history, of family and of community and caused psychological harm, in many cases resulting in mental illness.

It has created a separate, though far from distinct, community, edging off into both the Aboriginal and the white community. That is why, administratively, it is difficult to target. Non-Indigenous organisations assume that the needs of the stolen generations should be met through Aboriginal organisations. Aboriginal organisations have their hands full dealing with the immense needs of Aboriginal people in general, and find it hard to give attention to the specific needs of the stolen generations.

New structures are needed. In recognition of this, the Victorian Government has assigned \$2.1 million to create a stolen generations organisation. Something like this is needed widely across the country.

The journey towards healing for a stolen generations person can be lengthy. Many have not yet started, while others have only just begun. Val Linow tells of the sight of a large white “SORRY” created in the sky above the Sydney Harbour Bridge on the day in May, 2000 when 250,000 people joined in solidarity in walking across that bridge. Val’s experience that day was the start of her personal journey of healing. That so many people cared overwhelmed her and diminished her feelings of anger for her past treatment to an extent that she could begin to forgive and, in doing so, to heal.

The crowds on the Sydney Harbour Bridge that day were matched, in the following weeks, by groups walking across bridges throughout Australia. The reaching out of the Australian nation to embrace the stolen generations can create conditions for healing and growth for all.

There is no mystery about what brings healing. It comes through people who care. Since *Bringing Them Home* was tabled, hundreds of thousands of Australians have shown that they care about the stolen generations. This has done much to commence the healing. The community and Government each have a role to play in continuing the process.

The National Sorry Day Committee is committed to encouraging the community contribution to healing. Many of the stolen generations feel alienated by their

experiences from their local community. There is a vital role for ordinary citizens who get to know the stolen generations in their area, arrange events to hear from them, welcome them to local organisations. Such initiatives have helped many of the stolen generations who were in despair to find healing and hope. The NSDC will go on encouraging this community involvement.

Churches have a significant role. Records of church-run institutions are increasingly becoming available, though more is still needed. The apologies of many churches have been appreciated. This gives them an opportunity to develop initiatives in cooperation with local stolen generations people to meet the particular needs they confront.

State and Territory Governments have all taken a vital step towards healing – an apology. All have taken further steps. For instance, the NSW Government funds one case-worker with Link-Up NSW, and has brought together information on institutions to which removed children were taken. However, the response of the States has been piecemeal, and none has devoted funds commensurate to the Federal Government. Yet most children were removed under laws passed by State Governments.

The Federal Government's response to the needs of the stolen generations has been limited and, in important ways, flawed. There has not been an acceptable apology, nor any attempt to develop an alternative to litigation for those who seek compensation. The considerable funds set aside for programs to assist the stolen generations have been poorly monitored. Yet, the need for professional services to assist the healing of stolen generations people remains great and can only happen through Governmental support.

Perhaps the greatest flaw is the Federal Government's reluctance to consult the stolen generations. Healing will come through restoring the dignity ripped from the stolen generations by tragically misguided policies, and consultation is one way to do that. They best know the steps they must take for healing. The NSDC appreciates the Federal Government's decision to consult the stolen generations about their commemoration in the Parliamentary Triangle in Canberra, and trusts that this will open the way for consultation on other important issues. The NSDC is ready to help facilitate this process.

The National Sorry Day Committee asks Federal and State Governments to recommit to healing the stolen generations.

To advance healing among the stolen generations the NSDC asks that:

Australian Governments commit themselves afresh to healing. Governments and the Australian community each have a vital role.

A national apology be offered to the stolen generations.

A consultation process be developed, with stolen generations people speaking for themselves on the use of the *Bringing Them Home* funds. The NSDC is ready to help develop this process.

A monitoring body be established, under the authority of COAG, MCATSIA or HREOC, with adequate resources and authority to evaluate the present responses to *Bringing Them Home*, determine the extent to which they are targeting the stolen generations, propose improvements, and monitor the ongoing programs.

State and Territory Governments assess their response to *Bringing Them Home*, and develop methods of co-ordinating their programs with Federal programs, perhaps through MCATSIA, so that programs are available as widely as possible to the stolen generations.

A survey be conducted to determine the extent to which family reunion services are needed, particularly in rural areas, and the services be resourced to meet this need. This will include improving facilities for training reunion workers in the many skills this task requires.

The seminar and the response

The paper above was presented to a seminar, “Are We Helping Them Home?” held in the Main Committee Room of Parliament House, Canberra, on 13th November 2002. Senator Aden Ridgeway hosted the seminar and 230 people attended. They included Federal and State Members of Parliament, stolen generations people from every State and Territory, Dr Mick Dodson, who had co-chaired the *Bringing Them Home* Inquiry, the Rev John Henderson, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches, and a wide range of public servants with responsibility for the delivery of *Bringing Them Home* services.

The seminar was chaired by the Co-Chairs of the National Sorry Day Committee, Audrey Ngingali Kinnear and John Brown. It was funded by a \$20,000 grant from ATSIC.

The seminar heard from:

Ngunnawal elders Ruth and Don Bell, welcoming participants to the land of their people

Bob Randell of Uluru, who sang his song *Brown Skin Baby*, which many regard as the anthem of the stolen generations

Dr Peter O’Brien, author of this report

Val Linow and Nancy Hill, past residents of Bomaderry Infants Home and Cootamundra Girls Home

Marjorie Thorpe, who had been a Victorian Commissioner assisting the *Bringing Them Home* Inquiry

Rosalie Fraser, a Link-Up worker in Western Australia, and Gillian Brannigan and Amy Atkins from Link Up Queensland

Debra Chandler from the Tasmanian Sorry Day Committee

Ivan Copley from the South Australian Journey of Healing Committee

Harold Furber, Lisa Watts, Penny Smith and Eileen Moseley from the Central Australian Stolen Generations and Families Aboriginal Corporation

Cecil Dixon and Cecil Bowden, past residents of Kinchela Boys Home

Johnnie Huckle and Helen Moran who sang the *Journey of Healing* song

Comments were made by Len Barratt, stolen generations counsellor; stolen generations members Priscilla Wightman, Robert Kitchener and Marita Ah Chee; and Jenny Gerrand of ANTaR Victoria

In a letter following the seminar, a Federal Member described the event as ‘extremely powerful’.

The seminar concluded with responses, first by the Hon Philip Ruddock, Minister for Indigenous Affairs

The Government recognises that the separation of Indigenous children from their families has been a tragic and terrible part of Australia's history. No-one denies the trauma that has been caused by those actions. I want to thank the organisers for providing the opportunity for so many people to come together, and for the very useful way in which the discussions have proceeded. I want to thank those from Kinchela who have shared their experience of the recent reunion, and how the event had helped them personally.

Over the last few months we have worked with the National Sorry Day Committee, particularly over the issues involving Reconciliation Place. We set aside some \$75,000 to enable the Committee to consult on how people's concerns and feelings might be addressed. It pleases me that the consultations have been constructive. They are an example of the way in which we might be able to work together on a wider range of issues.

I have been very impressed by the leadership which Audrey [Kinnear] and John [Brown] have given. They have engaged with me and other members of the Government in a constructive way - forceful at times, but you wouldn't expect it to be otherwise. I think we have shown that we can work together, even where we acknowledge differences of opinion.

I've started to read your report, *Are we helping them home?* I've seen the surveys on the progress of the *Bringing Them Home* recommendations. While I can't agree with everything, I know that the writers intended it to be constructive, and I accept it in that spirit. I want to ensure that the efforts are achieving results. I lament when I hear the concerns expressed, particularly about how counselling is seen not to be effective.

In the summary that was just presented, you've argued that the efforts might be better targeted, and you ask what consultation arrangements we might be able to adopt in the future. I'm more than happy to consult, and I would seek to involve some of my colleagues as well. The report commends the approach taken by Kay Patterson (Minister for Community Service and Health). As Minister for coordinating our efforts I am happy to take forward your views to her and my other colleagues.

On the question of monitoring, I was disappointed at the comments because MCATSIA at our request has commissioned an independent evaluation of all Government and non-Government responses to *Bringing Them Home*. That evaluation is currently under way. I will ensure that the reviewer receives a copy of the report and the papers from the Central Australian Stolen Generations and Families Aboriginal Corporation. I understand people responsible for undertaking the review are here today.

Finally you have suggested a survey to consider the family reunion needs in remote areas. I'll take that up with ATSIC - the future needs and development of a Link-Up network. And I will particularly include in that the relationship between the counselling network within the community medical services.

I take on board the point made by (Senator) Aden (Ridgeway) and those who spoke about the importance of documentation and funding access to documentation. The States do have a responsibility, not only because they have access to a lot of the information but because they ought to be putting real resources behind their fine words. To their credit, Victoria and Western Australia have shown a disposition to work cooperatively. I hope that they can move further in that direction, and that it will encourage others.

I welcomed the opportunity to hear the many reports this morning. I thank you for the spirit in which they have been presented. I undertake to make a copy of your report available to all my colleague Ministers, and hope we can move forward together and get better outcomes.

He was followed by the Hon Carmen Lawrence, MP, Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs

‘Are we helping them home?’ is a very important question. I’m disappointed that the story has to be told over and over again. The Senate Inquiry pointed out many of these problems nearly two years ago. We can’t continue to hear, on anniversary after anniversary, that not very much has been achieved. That is a form of disrespect to the people who have been so injured. I offer my co-operation – indeed, in dealing with the State Labor Governments – to ensure that we can achieve outcomes.

I don’t think most of us can begin to imagine what members of the stolen generations have been through, but our responsibility is to try. I’m disappointed to hear Members of Parliament say that the problem has been exaggerated. The effects are well documented. Parenting skills were undermined over generations, for instance, and it is critical that we deal with these issues by appropriate programmes and support. The loss of heritage and culture, and the severe effects on the families left behind, who were often forgotten, the people who saw their children taken away, their brothers and sisters removed – they are all part of this complex process of healing.

We haven’t come close to meeting the recommendations of the original report. State and Territory Governments and a good number of services and the churches have made appropriate apologies. We still haven’t got a national apology. It is time for the Federal Government to acknowledge that it is an important part of the healing process. Everybody who’s been separated says so, although some have given up and some say they are not sure they would want to hear that apology from people who are so reluctant to give it.

We haven’t seen much work on the guarantees against the repetition of these problems. A lot of people fear that the practices of some State Governments may be repeating some of the severe psychological problems that resulted from separation. And the recommendations appear not to have been heeded nationally or, to an extent that I find satisfactory, at a State level.

On the question of restitution – language and culture services, family tracing and reunion services, rehabilitation – the response has been inadequate. We need a much stronger commitment by all levels of Government to an Indigenous-specific,

culturally-appropriate counselling service that deals uniquely with the problems of the stolen generations and their families. They have difficulties that none others face, and we need specialists in these fields. I know some very good people, often working without adequate recognition, but from my own observations and from your reports, we are not providing either the counsellors in the right places or the right support. I'm a psychologist, and I understand how difficult it is to get culturally-appropriate counselling services. But it wouldn't take very much to get it right if the will were there.

And we do have to address the whole question of compensation of people directly affected by forced removal.

These things were all raised in the Senate report of 2000. The Government has had time, and its Departments have had time, and State Governments have had time, to come to terms with deficiencies in their programmes, to link up the counselling services with the Link-Up programme so that no-one is left not knowing what is available to them. That means advertisements, making people aware. It means bringing the community along as well – public education is vital. There are a whole lot of issues to address jointly.

It would appear that the services being delivered are not meeting the needs of the stolen generation, either because there hasn't been proper consultation or they haven't been adequately located, or they've not been linked up so that there is an appropriate package of services. The Link-Up programme was slow to get off the ground, and many people are only just beginning to understand what's available. And we don't offer much support to the families which suddenly have someone turn up and say, 'I'm your daughter, I'm your son'. That's a traumatic experience for most people.

Finally, we need to deal with the issue of a reparations tribunal. PIAC, after consultation with the relevant bodies and the stolen generations, put together an excellent proposal, which would offer members of the stolen generations the appropriate services. It would deal with the question of appropriate reparations, which will apply in some cases because of sexual and physical abuse, for example. Sometimes providing compensation may be the only way to redress these wrongs. I know that's not requested or even desired by a great many members of the stolen generations. But a tribunal could provide a forum for Indigenous people to have their stories recorded in perpetuity. It could provide reparations packages for individuals and groups, designed for their particular needs, to help them heal and move on with their lives. Some will be in the form of counselling, some in the form of reunions like the Kinchela Boys, some in the form of culture. And compensation paid where there is evidence of illegal behaviour and physical and sexual abuse, as a minimum.

Such a body could make recommendations about government and church practices on indigenous child separation, so we don't repeat these problems. These restorative justice mechanisms have been embraced in Canada and Ireland for the victims of sexual abuse, and I can't see why Australian Governments can't do the same.

Seminar host Senator Aden Ridgeway also spoke:

The work of many people over many years led to the Inquiry which produced *Bringing Them Home*. It was the first opportunity to put forward the stories in the form of a report with recommendations. Since then it has become apparent that the Federal Government's response was lacking. That is why I instituted the Senate Inquiry. It revealed that the Government cherry-picked recommendations that were politically acceptable without understanding that the recommendations must work hand in hand to bring about healing. Seventeen of the 54 recommendations were taken up, but the Government failed to address others that are critical if there is to be a journey of national healing.

The first was a national apology.

Secondly, the programmes put in place were often generic rather than targeted at the stolen generations. It was clear that there was something distinct in their experience. But this difference was not recognised in terms of designing counselling services to suit stolen generations people whose inflictions get passed from one generation to the next.

We were critical of the limited consultation about the establishment of the Regional Health Centres. We found there was little correlation between the centres and the places where significant numbers of the stolen generations lived. Nor were there performance measures to assess whether they were effective.

The third was the lack of a co-ordinated 'whole of Government' response, and monitoring across all levels of Government. Despite the fact that we'd advertised nationally, few submissions came from State and Territory Governments. This was an abrogation of responsibility. Leadership has to be shown at the Federal Government level, but State and Territory Governments must also bear responsibility. Until 1967, it was the State and Territory Governments that dominated the lives of Indigenous people.

Finally, there was an outright refusal to provide an alternative to litigation. People are being forced to go down the adversarial path and relive their experiences in a way that is not compassionate, not decent. Our Inquiry recommended a reparations tribunal. It supported the model developed by PIAC in consultation with the stolen generations, which deals with reparations not just in terms of compensation but of repairing and restoring those things that had been taken away. The Government says that this can't be done, but that is nonsense. Victim claims tribunals, and other tribunals have established how injustice can be redressed. There is no reason why the law should be colour-focused. It should be colour-blind.

Dr William Jonas, Social Justice Commissioner, Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission, sent this message:

Dear colleagues,

Due to other commitments I am unable to join you in Canberra at this important seminar today. A representative of my office is present to contribute to the discussion and to report back to me on the outcomes of the seminar.

To indicate the importance that I attach to the seminar and the issues under discussion, I have prepared this statement which with the agreement of the National Sorry Day Committee I hope will be presented to participants.

It has been five and half years since *Bringing Them Home* was released. It is clear that many of the needs of people forcibly removed from their families have not been met in this timeframe. Worse than this, significant and necessary components of reparations are not on the government's agenda. There remain grave difficulties for achieving healing in absence of a national apology and an appropriate framework for the provision of reparations.

Much like reconciliation, we face a situation where the government's current approach to forcible removal policies is reductive and narrowly confined. We must continue to condemn their narrow approach, which of itself is an ongoing source of grief and trauma to Indigenous people across the country.

There remain, however, serious questions about the implementation of the government's current approach.

These concerns are highlighted in the paper prepared by the National Sorry Day Committee for this seminar (*Are we helping them home? Surveys of progress in the implementation of the Bringing Them Home recommendations*), and that prepared by the Central Australian Stolen Generations & Families Aboriginal Corporation (*Where is the \$63 million?*). Many issues were also highlighted at the conference convened by HREOC, ATSIC and the Public Interest Advocacy Centre in August 2001, titled *Moving Forward – Achieving reparations for the stolen generations*. I would particularly draw your attention to the following recommendations of the conference, which state:

2. That governments and churches ensure the effective participation of Stolen Generations members in all decision making that affects them.

12. That Commonwealth funding for reunion and counselling services be the subject of adequate consultation with Stolen Generations members to ensure that it better meets the specific needs of members of the Stolen Generations. Participants were concerned that current funding arrangements do not ensure that resources are being allocated to the appropriate organisations (particularly for counselling services).

14. That the Federal Government provide recurrent funding to Link-up for counselling services, family reunions and annual reunions of people removed to the same institutions.

I remain concerned at the dysfunctional nature of government programmes which were intended to address the specific needs of people forcibly removed from their families but which are so poorly targeted that they some times don't even reach this group. I am also concerned at the lack of processes to involve Indigenous people forcibly removed from their families and their representative bodies in decision making and in determining the priority areas and appropriate outcomes.

And I remain astounded that government has yet to comprehend the significance of creating more workable links between family tracing / Link Up services and counselling services. I can only presume that they do not understand the link as it is such a basic and simple matter that there can be no other explanation for the inaction on this issue.

It is expected that each of these factors would be highlighted through an adequate monitoring and evaluative framework. It is manifest that such a framework is still non-existent. HREOC has, alongside the Sorry Day committee and other organisations, critiqued the lack of effective monitoring and evaluation of funds and programs dealing with forcible removals.

I have been particularly concerned about this monitoring role being relegated to a responsibility of the Ministerial Council of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (MCATSIA). While MCATSIA are currently conducting a review of programs relating to forcible removal policies, there have been significant delays in commencing this review and the unfocused and uncritical survey work currently being conducted on behalf of MCATSIA does not instil confidence that the results will be rigorous or sufficiently analytical.

HREOC remains willing to undertake this monitoring role, as envisaged in recommendation 2b of *Bringing Them Home*. However, it requires a funding commitment from the federal government in order for us to do so.

In conclusion, I fully support the proposals of the National Sorry Day Committee contained in *Are we helping them home?* These proposals identify the minimum actions that must now take place to recommit governments to healing for the stolen generations and for adequate consultation and monitoring mechanisms to be put into place. Governments presently are not sufficiently accountable for their programmes to members of the Stolen Generations.

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