

# ADDITIONAL COMMENTS BY LIBERAL SENATORS

1.1 Liberal Senators agree with the majority report's consideration of the evidence, and support the majority report's conclusions and recommendations. Liberal Senators also express their strong support for the national apology given by the Federal Parliament on 13 February 2008.

1.2 However, Liberal Senators wish to make some additional comments in relation to use of the term 'stolen generation', not only in the majority report but also in a broader context. In essence, Liberal Senators query the use of the term 'stolen generation' which they consider implies that past policies of separation of Indigenous children from their families involved, in all cases, forcible removal undertaken with dubious motive.

1.3 In this context, Liberal Senators wish to emphasise an important point made by the Opposition Leader, the Hon Dr Brendan Nelson MP, in his speech in support of the apology motion on 13 February 2008. In his speech, Dr Nelson stated that:

In some cases, government policies evolved from the belief that the Aboriginal race would not survive and should be assimilated; in others, the conviction was that 'half-caste' children in particular should, for their own protection, be removed to government and church run institutions where conditions reflected the standards of the day. Others were placed with white families whose kindness motivated them to the belief that rescued children deserved a better life.

Our responsibility, every one of us, is to understand what happened here, why it happened, the impact it had not only on those who were removed, but also those who did the removing and supported it.

Our generation does not own these actions, nor should it feel guilt for what was done in many, but not all cases, with the best of intentions. But in saying we are sorry – and deeply so – we remind ourselves that each generation lives in ignorance of the long term consequences of its decisions and actions. Even when motivated by inherent humanity and decency to reach out to the dispossessed in extreme adversity, our actions can have unintended outcomes. As such, many decent Australians are hurt by accusations of theft in relation to their good intentions.<sup>1</sup>

---

1 The Hon. Dr Brendan Nelson MP, 'We Are Sorry', Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples, 13 February 2008 at <http://www.brendannelson.com.au/Pages/Article.aspx?ID=557> (accessed 13 June 2008).

1.4 Liberal Senators strongly endorse Dr Nelson's comments.

**Senator Guy Barnett**

**Deputy Chair**

**Senator Mary Jo Fisher**

**Senator Russell Trood**