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To: Legal and Constitutional, Committee (SEN)

I believe that if this or previous governments have enacted policies that have proven to be founded on either racist or flawed thinking and that these policies have had a detrimental outcome on those affected by such policies then it is incumbent on the Government to make restitution to those individuals. The fact that the individuals are in this case, Aboriginal people is, in a sense irrelevant.

There is ample evidence that many of those who were removed from their families have been adversely affected. Sure, some, maybe many, ended up in good families but this does not excuse the intent of the policies nor the negative impact it had on many individuals. Nor does it excuse the reality that it reinforced racist sentiment in sections of the community. The other undeniable fact is that many of these individuals have suffered a range of problems which can be attributed to their forced removal and subsequent loss of contact with their family, their culture and their history.

Why should they be denied compensation? A wrong has been committed, or at best a misguided practice implemented which resulted in suffering for those individuals and their families who were on the receiving end.

It is really a question of fairness and of basic justice that these individuals should have access to compensation.

Issues of compensation sometimes bring fear of the slippery slope or the setting a precedent argument but are these really sustainable or, really the nub of the issue?

The terms of compensation can be specific to this group of individuals so that anyone with a beef against the Government does not find solace in the fact that compensation is being paid to a particular group. If other groups have a bonafide argument to also seek recompense from the Government for injustice perpetrated against them as a group why shouldn't they have recourse to the legal system and if their case is proven, they should, likewise have access to a compensation fund.

A society can be judged by the way it treats those who have been wronged and the Government is the focal point of our society. I want a society that recognises mistreatment of others and is prepared to make up for it, to acknowledge any wrongs it has committed and is prepared to try to ensure such wrongs are not repeated. Recognising and correcting past mistakes and bad judgments has a cost, part of which is reasonable and just compensation.

In my own life, if I make a mistake or do something wrong, I always apologise and try in some way to make amends. I expect no less from my Government.

John Amadio
