


30 March, 2008.

The Chairperson,
The Senate Standing Committee on Legal & Constitutional Affairs.
Parliament House,
CANBERRA...ACT...2600.

Dear Senator,

Stolen Generation Compensation Bill 2008.

I submit that, while you seek to design a compensation model for ex gratia payments to be made under the above legislation to eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons, the scope of the Bill be extended to all *Stolen Generations* contained within the Australian population.

My grandmother was a member of the *Stolen Generation*.

During her seventeenth year, the family decided that it was no longer viable for Margaret McCann to remain at home due to her health and for reasons of financial hardships. So it was decided to send her to greener pastures.

She was packed up and with the barest necessities in money and clothing she was removed from her family environment shipped off the colonies. The year 1878.

Can you imagine going from a farming area and being placed on a ship - she had never even seen the sea before that - and without any family support nor previously known travelling companions set sail to the other side of the world.

The initial removal from her family and culture would have been devastating particularly in one so young and with the knowledge that she would never see her homeland, family nor friends again.

In clothing that would not have suited the transition through the various climatic zones, she battled the elements in a vessel that these days would not be allowed to put to sea.

On arrival in a strange land, she was at the mercy on the local white inhabitants for accommodation and employment. She would have been preyed upon by unscrupulous households to perform domestic duties for which she had had no previous training and would have been denied payment until she reached certain levels with her skills.

She was alone, a million miles from home (so to speak) without the support of family and friends in a strange and often hostile culture quite unlike the one in which she grew up and by now sadly missing.

However, Margaret persevered, applying herself to menial tasks. She had to clothe and feed herself, defend herself from unwanted approaches, contend with a climate that was a total stranger to her young years.

Margaret's mind often engaged in reminiscences of home - how were the parents and siblings that she had been forced to leave, where were the social activities - the singing, dancing, the story telling - that had been part and parcel of her early upbringing. She was destined never to see any of these again.

Margaret endured all these hardships and settled down to making the most of a difficult

situation.

She married in 1890 and raised four children through hard times including the restraints imposed on the population during the First World War, droughts, economic downturns including the Great Depression. She maintained and instilled in her children a fierce love of Australia.

Margaret's first encounter with anyone that had any idea of her homeland neighbourhood was not until the late 1940's..some 62 years after she became a member of *the Stolen Generation*.

She was never fortunate enough to be able to travel to the land of her culture and upbringing nor was she to ever meet and greet any of her kith and kin. Inwardly she must have been heartbroken and lonely.

Margaret died at the tender age of 99 years. The Clan that was started by Margaret McCann totals : Children..4 ; Grand-children ..13 ; Great Grand-children..30 ; Great-great-grand-children..42. I won't go into the skills and talents of the Clan for they are many.


Margaret Mc Cann's life mirrored many of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' life - she was abandoned by her family. Lost any contact with her culture. Was manipulated.

She did however suffer more - she was removed from her homeland, never to return and she was sent to another land with a vastly different climate.

Margaret neither sought nor received any compensation for the difficulties that life dealt her.

I submit the Margaret's life be the design used in formulating the model for compensation for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of *the Stolen Generation* for many other people suffered the same plight.

Sincerely,



(Peter M. Gerry)

Member of the McCann Clan.