

## **Submission to the Inquiry into the Stolen Generation Compensation Bill 2008**

The apology to the Stolen Generations on 13 February was a major step in moving towards reconciliation and in implementing the recommendations of the *Bringing Them Home Report 1997*.

The removal of thousands of children was part of a social experiment under which State and Federal Governments took complete control of Aboriginal lives: where they lived and worked, whom they married, the care of their children, the management of their earnings. By depriving the Aboriginal peoples of freedom of choice, in regulating every aspect of their lives, governments made themselves responsible for the lives and conduct of these peoples.

From the experience of our Sisters, many of whom have been involved in education for many years, including the education of Indigenous children, we are aware of the destructive impact “learned helplessness” has on a person’s self-care and ability to form relationships. This outcome snowballs to subsequent generations.

Research data abounds in the stories of stolen children who did not experience a supportive loving family life. The lack of modelling of parenting skills has affected their own children and grandchildren.

Educational psychologists stress the importance for children to learn language and values in an atmosphere of acceptance and loving physical contact. Removing the children from this type of upbringing deprived them of the capacity to learn effectively.

We support the proposals in this Bill for compensation payments. This is a debt owed by the governments that have abused and countenanced the abuse of Aboriginal lives in the building of the nation that Australia is today.

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