



Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing

Submission of the

DEPARTMENT of HEALTH AND AGEING

to the

**SENATE LEGAL and CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE**

on the

INQUIRY INTO THE STOLEN GENERATION COMPENSATION

BILL 2008

9 MAY 2008

Introduction

The Department of Health and Ageing welcomes the opportunity to make this submission to the Senate Constitutional and Legal Affairs Committee for its *Inquiry into the Stolen Generations Compensation Bill 2008*. The Department administers a number of programs designed to assist members of the Stolen Generations and their families. These programs were recently independently evaluated. Client satisfaction with positive outcomes as a result of these programs was high.

Background

The *Bringing Them Home Report* from the *National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families*, was conducted by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and tabled in Parliament on 26 May 1997. The Report made 54 recommendations covering issues such as a national apology, compensation, reparation, family tracing and reunion, counselling and increased access to records.

The Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing has responsibility for the initiatives addressing recommendations 30 (a and b) and 33-35 of the *Bringing Them Home Report*, which focus on the social and emotional well being issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples affected by past forced removal policies.

- Recommendation 30 proposed the establishment of family tracing and reunion services;
- Recommendations 33-35 supported a broad approach to provision of counselling and education addressing the healing of the whole community; and
- Recommendation 33b specified that funds should go to existing Indigenous organisations, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary health care services, child care agencies and substance use services.

First four-year funding cycle

In 1997, the Australian Government provided funds of \$63 million over four years (until June 2001) to respond to the *Bringing Them Home* report. This response concentrated on initiatives to assist with family reunion and to provide health and parenting services for those affected by past separation practices. Measures were also introduced to allow families to access their records and tell their stories, along with expanding culture and language maintenance programs. These measures were:

- \$16 million to the Department for 50 specialist Indigenous mental health counsellors (Bringing Them Home Counsellors);
- \$17 million to the Department for professional support and training for counsellors (Social and Emotional Well-Being Regional Centres);
- \$5.9 million to the Department for family support and parenting programs (Funds transferred to the Department of Family and Community Services);
- \$11.3 million to the (then) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission to expand Link-Up family tracing and reunion services nationally;
- \$9 million to the (then) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission for language and culture maintenance programs;
- \$2 million to the National Archives for improved access to Commonwealth records; and
- \$1.6 million to the National Library for an oral history project for those affected to tell their stories.

Second four-year funding cycle

The 2001-02 Commonwealth budget included continuing funds of \$53.8 million over a further four years (until June 2005) to continue the package of measures including:

- \$33.25 million to the Department to fund the Bringing Them Home Counsellors and the Social and Emotional Well-being Regional Centres;
- \$9.8 million to the (then) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission to support Link-Up and family tracing and reunion services nationally;
- \$3.6 million to the Communications and the Arts Portfolio;
- \$5.9 million to the Department of Family and Community Services;
- \$1.35 million for indexation.

In July 2004, the Link Up program transferred from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission to the Department of Health and Ageing as a part of Australian Government reform to the administration of Indigenous Affairs.

The funding for Link Up, Bringing Them Home Counsellors and Social and Emotional Well-Being Regional Centres has now been rolled into the Department of Health and Ageing's base allocation. In 2007-08 a total of \$25.825 million is provided to these programs nationally.

Current Programs administered by the Department of Health and Ageing to benefit Stolen Generations members

Bringing Them Home Programs and Service Delivery

The Bringing Them Home Counsellors program provides funding for over 108 counsellor positions in 73 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Services across Australia. These positions provide counselling to individuals, families and communities affected by past practices regarding the forced removal of children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

Bringing Them Home Counsellors respond to the needs of a broad range of clients, including those removed, those who were left behind, and the children, grandchildren and relatives of all those affected by separation practices.

Because the inter-generational effects of removal practices are widespread and caused emotional harm throughout families and across generations, entire Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are potentially in need of counselling around the effects of past removal policies.

A survey of services providing Bringing Them Home counselling in 2003-04 indicated that 26 % of Bringing Them Home counsellors nationally held no formal qualifications. The percentage of counsellors who held qualifications in psychology was 16%, social work (17%), mental health nursing (5%), some other degree (8%), mental health diploma (5%) or some other diploma (27%).

In 2004-05, 62% of Bringing Them Home counsellors were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. In 2004-05, 62% of client contacts were with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In a 2005-06 survey of Australian Government-funded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary health care services, there were 110,000 client contacts with social and emotional wellbeing staff or psychiatrists. The 110,000 client contacts do not include contacts with other staff, such as doctors or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health who are not designated as social and emotional wellbeing staff. This is therefore an under-estimate of access to culturally appropriate social and emotional wellbeing health programs within these services. The 2006-07 data will not be available until June 2008.

For detail on services funded to provide Bringing Them Home counselling, please refer to Attachment A.

Link Up Program

Following the release of the *Bringing Them Home Report*, in 1998 the Australian Government established a national network of Link Up services. Prior to this a number of Link Up services were already operational, with Link Up New South Wales (the first service) being established in 1980.

Currently, there are eleven Link Up sites across the country funded to provide support, guidance and assistance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to trace and reunite with their families. For detail, please refer to Attachment B.

Funding for 22 counsellors in Link Up services was introduced in 2007-08. These counsellors are specifically funded to provide counselling to Stolen Generation members, and to support Link Up clients through the family tracing and reunion process. Since formal funding to the Link Up program commenced in the 1998-99, over 1,356 reunions have occurred and over 35,178 clients have been supported by the services.

The Department also provides funds to both the National Sorry Day Committee and the Stolen Generation Alliance to support their respective annual general meetings and national activity undertaken as part of National Sorry Day, 26 May annually. Both consumer groups advocate nationally on behalf of Stolen Generations members.

In addition the Department funds the Aboriginal Family History Unit in the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies to support Link-Up Caseworkers in family tracing and records research. They also assist and refer anyone of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, especially members of the Stolen Generation, with their family history research.

Social and Emotional Wellbeing Regional Centres

The Australian Government provides funding for twelve Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) Regional Centres nationally. The Regional Centres provide training, support and planning assistance for organisations and individuals working in Indigenous social and emotional wellbeing. They also provide training and provide professional support for Aboriginal mental health workers, Bringing Them Home Counsellors and Link Up workers. Each Regional Centre has developed its own model of working within these broad guidelines.

Evaluation of the Programs

In March 2006, the Department of Health and Ageing commissioned Urbis Keys Young, an independent social research firm, to evaluate Link Up; the Bringing Them Home Counsellors; the Social and Emotional Well-Being Regional Centres Programs; and some related projects.

The evaluation was conducted through extensive national consultation and an Evaluation Reference Group was convened to assist this process. Membership included representatives of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, SEWB Regional Centres, Stolen Generations advocacy organisations, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health. The evaluation report was publicly released in May 2007. A copy is on the Department of Health and Ageing's website at

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-oatsih-pubs-bth-eval>

Findings of the UKY evaluation

The evaluation found the Link Up and Bringing Them Home Counsellor programs had provided services to a large number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, who in most instances would not have received services otherwise. In addition, clients reported high levels of satisfaction and positive outcomes from contact with the Link Up and Bringing Them Home Counsellor programs. Levels of satisfaction were lower with SEWB Regional Centres.

The Regional Centres tended to focus on only one of their four core roles - curriculum development and training - and neglected the other three roles (training needs assessments, professional supervision and support of the health workforce, and development of cross-sector linkages). Further, they did not adequately support staff from the Link Up and Bringing Them Home programs.

Major problems identified

The major problems identified by the evaluation were:

- lack of focus on first generation Stolen Generations clients;
- recruitment and retention of appropriately qualified staff;
- inadequate program management by the Department and consequent inconsistencies in service delivery; and
- limited geographical reach of services.

In developing and implementing responses to the UKY recommendations, the Department has undertaken to:

- support greater access by first generation members of the Stolen Generations to services;
- ensure the services continue to expand their geographic coverage to meet the needs of the target populations;
- ensure greater consistency in the delivery of the services;
- assist services through skilled and qualified staff receiving appropriate training, professional development and individual supervision; and
- develop a reform agenda for the Social and Emotional Regional Centres to ensure improved workforce support.

To improve administration of the programs the Department has:

- updated the Handbook for the Link Up Program to ensure national consistency in the administration of the program;
- developed a Handbook for the Bringing Them Home and Link Up Counsellors to ensure national consistency in the administration of the program; and
- drafted duty statements for Bringing Them Home Counsellors, Link Up Counsellors, Link Up Caseworkers and Aboriginal Mental Health Workers.

These documents are currently with key stakeholders for comment and options for reform of the Social and Emotional Well-Being Regional Centres are being developed.

Overall, the Urbis Keys Young evaluation places the Department in a good position to plan and improve service delivery. In 2007-08, the Australian Government has committed an additional \$15.7 million over four years to enable 1000 Stolen Generations members to reunite with their families through Link Up services; fund an extra 20 Bringing Them Home counsellors; and ask the States and Territories to fund another 20 counsellors, and focus these in areas of need - such as male health and remote and rural health).

The implementation of the Government's election commitment will further strengthen and expand current service delivery to members of the Stolen Generations.

**BTH Counsellor Locations by Jurisdiction
As at 31 March 2008**

QLD - 15
Bidgerdii ATSI Corp Community Health Service (Rockhampton)
Goondir Aboriginal Corp for Health Services (Dalby)
Kambu Medical Centre Ipswich Inc
KASH Aboriginal Corporation (Auspice Yapatjarra Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Corporation) (Mt Isa)
Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Health Service Limited
Aboriginal and Islander Community Health Service Brisbane Limited
Wuchopperen Medical Service Ltd (Cairns)
Mulungu Aboriginal Corporation Medical Centre (Mareeba)
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service Mackay
Qld Aboriginal & Islander Health Council
Cunnamulla Aboriginal Corporation for Health
QLD Dept of Health - Torres Strait
Pormpur Panth (Weipa Cape York)
NPA (Northern Peninsula Area) Resource Centre (Cape York)
Link up QLD Aboriginal Corporation
NSW - 16
Armidale & District Service Incorporation
Pius X Aboriginal Corporation (Moree)
Walhallow Aboriginal Corporation (Caroona)
Tharawal Aboriginal Corp (Campbelltown)
South Coast Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation (Nowra)
Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Service (Wollongong)
Wellington Aboriginal Corporation Health Service
Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service Co-op
Bourke Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service
Biripi Aboriginal Corporation Medical Centre (Taree)
Katungal Aboriginal Corporation Community & Medical Services (Narooma)
Benelongs Haven Limited (Kempsey)

NSW (cont'd)
Awabakal Newcastle Aboriginal Co-op
Riverina Medical and Dental Aboriginal Corporation (Wagga)
Rekindling Spirit (Lismore)
AMS, Western Sydney Cooperative (Mt Druitt)
WA - 12
Bega Garnbirringu Health Service (Kalgoorlie)
Carnarvon Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation
Derby Aboriginal Health Services Council Aboriginal Corporation
Ord Valley Aboriginal Health Service Aboriginal Corporation
Geraldton Regional Aboriginal Medical Service
Mawarnkarra Health Service Aboriginal Corporation (Roeburne)
Yura Yungi Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation (Halls Creek)
Ngaanyatjarra Health Service (all services are in WA) (Warakurna)
Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service Incorporated (Perth)
Wirraka Maya Health Service Aboriginal Corporation (Port Hedland)
Great Southern Division of General Practice Ltd (Albany)
South West Aboriginal Medical Service Incorporated (Bunbury)
TAS - 1
Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre Incorporated (Hobart)
NT - 4
Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Inc (Alice Springs)
Wurli Wirlinjamg Aboriginal Corporation Social and Emotional Well Being Centre (Katherine)
Danila Dilba Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation Social and Emotional Well Being Centre (Darwin)
Anyinginyi Congress Aboriginal Corporation Stolen Generations Resource Centre (Tennant Creek)
VIC - 15
Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency Co-op (Melbourne)
Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation (Sale)
Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation (Heywood)
Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-op

VIC (cont'd)
Njernda Aboriginal Corp
Gunditjmara Aboriginal Co-Op
Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Co-op (Horsham)
Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative (Geelong)
Mildura Aboriginal Corporation
Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-op (Shepparton)
Murray Valley Aboriginal Co-op (Robinvale)
Bunurong Health Service / Dandenong & District Aboriginal CoOp (Dandenong)
Victorian Aboriginal Health Service Co-op (Melbourne)
Yarra Valley Community Health Service (Healesville)
Kirrae Whurrong Health Service Incorporated (Purnim)
SA – 10
Kalparrin Incorporated (Murray Bridge)
Nunkuwarnin Yunti Incorporated (Adelaide)
Tullawon Health Service Incorporated - (Yalata)
Ceduna / Koonibba Aboriginal Health Service Inc
Port Lincoln Aboriginal Health Service Incorporated
Pika Wiya Health Services Incorporated (Port Augusta)
Aboriginal Sobriety Group (Berri)
Mid North Regional Health Service (Port Pirie)
Umoona Tjulagku Health Service Inc (Coober Pedy)
Country Health SA (Port Pirie)
ACT - 1
Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service Inc. (Canberra)
TOTAL - 74

Attachment B

Link Up Counsellors		
Service	Location Address	Positions
Link-Up NSW Aboriginal Corporation	LAWSON NSW 2783	3 + 1 temp. (for ACT)
Central Australian Stolen Generations & Families Aboriginal Corporation	ALICE SPRINGS NT 0871	2
Northern Territory Stolen Generation Aboriginal Corporation	PARAP NT 0812 [Darwin]	2 (from 2008-09)
Link-Up Queensland Aboriginal Corporation	WEST END QLD 4101	4
Nunkuwarrin Yunti of South Australia	HUTT STREET SA 5000	2
Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA)	NORTHCOTE VIC 3070	2 + 1 temp (for TAS)
Great Southern Aboriginal Health Service	ALBANY WA 6332	1
Kimberley Stolen Generation Aboriginal Corporation	BROOME WA 6725	1
Ngnowar Aerwah Aboriginal Corporation	WYNDHAM WA 6740	1
Wangka Maya Link Up	SOUTH HEDLAND WA 6722	1
Yorgum Aboriginal Corporation	NORTHBRIDGE WA 6865	1