

**Submission
No 20**

**INQUIRY INTO REPARATIONS FOR THE STOLEN
GENERATIONS IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

Organisation: Mount Druitt and District Reconciliation Group

Date received: 17/10/2015



**MOUNT DRUITT AND DISTRICT
RECONCILIATION GROUP**

Convenors:
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17 October 2015

The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No3
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
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Dear Director

Email: gpscno3@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Inquiry into Reparations for the Stolen Generations in New South Wales

Members and supporters of Mt Druitt & District Reconciliation Group are concerned that little has been achieved as a result of the recommendations from the “Bringing Them Home” Report that was released in 1997.

We know that that tens of thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were forcibly removed from their families.

Each year, since former Prime Minister Rudd made his Apology speech in Federal Parliament in 2008, our group has held an annual Apology Commemoration which is attended by many of the Stolen Generations living in the Blacktown and Penrith LGAs. They speak of the trauma resulting from the treatment, they as children, received that left them emotionally and physically damaged. Those who were later able to reconnect with some of their families also speak of the loss experienced by those who were left behind.

Our nation is a signatory to United Nations documents that call for reparation for violations carried out by citizens, public servants, and as a result of government policies that failed to acknowledge the rights of First Nations peoples. We continue to ignore the responsibilities we signed up to as a federation and we as citizens of the state of New South Wales must accept responsibility for.

We believe our New South Wales state government should:

- Make an unqualified apology for past mistreatment and ensure there will be no repetition of past discriminatory legislation;
- Assist with rehabilitation – physical and mental;
- Deliver free education – especially literacy and numeracy and vocational training to compensate for lost opportunities;

- Provide assistance to teachers and Elders to educate students about pre and post settlement history;
- Provide assistance to engage Elders to tell traditional and modern stories with ethical outcomes including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, language and culture; and
- Develop financial compensation – which needs to include funding to support for intergenerational healing and reparation.

For the Community in general, there should be mandatory Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, language and cultural education programs for teachers and for inclusion in school curricula; and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander history, language and cultural education in the community, especially for those providing services to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

For our New South Wales Government we believe there is a need to restore respect for a policy of self-determination (as agreed to by Australia in the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples) and cultural integrity in government policies;

- Review child protection practices which are leading to an increase in forced removals – the Kinship Care Program must be more adequately resourced;
- Re-visit the ‘Justice reinvestment’ program which is an approach in tackling the causes of crime and provides a viable option as our prison expansion costs become unsustainable;
- Negotiate with the Federal government for a better deal for Indigenous community organisations for service delivery – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be granted support to work for their communities rather than organising funding through well-meaning non-government organisations;
- Restore funding levels for TAFE courses that allow students to gain literacy, numeracy and vocational skills that lead to employment – that is particularly important for Indigenous students and imperative for women in their thirties and forties who did not have opportunities earlier in their life; and
- Lift the profile of Indigenous people through the arts, music, drama and literary grants; and
- prevent repetition of past practices and ongoing harm by considering the effects of existing policies, laws and regulations.

Our Reconciliation Group aims to raise the profile of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by holding:

- an annual Apology Commemoration event;
- an annual Reconciliation Walk and Concert;
- an occasional Yarn Circle at Holy Family Centre with Elders telling stories that lead to an ethical way to live a good life; and
- support Aboriginal culture in the community.

We hope that this **Inquiry into Reparations for the Stolen Generations in New South Wales** will lead to justice for the Stolen Generations of New South Wales. There is an increasing number of forced removals occurring today and we must find a better way.

Yours sincerely

President
Margueite (Rita) Tobin