



Learning about the Stolen Generations :  
the National Sorry Day Committee's School Resource





## **This Resource is part of the National Sorry Day Committee's Schools Program**

**All schools can join for free by visiting [www.nsd.org.au](http://www.nsd.org.au)**

The National Sorry Day Committee (NSDC) is a not-for-profit organisation that advocates for the rights of the Stolen Generations at the national level, and that raises awareness and knowledge of the history and continuing effects of the practices of removal, with the aim of bringing about the full implementation of the 1997 *Bringing them home* Report's 54 recommendations.

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# Learning about the Stolen Generations: the National Sorry Day Committee's School Resource

## A message to Australia's teaching community

Welcome to 'Learning about the Stolen Generations', the National Sorry Day Committee's long awaited resource for schools.

Having developed strong working relationships with teachers across Australia in recent years, we understand just how important a role you play in helping children to grow up with a fuller understanding of the different histories and cultures experienced by the peoples of this country.

The aim of this resource is to provide you with accurate and concise background information as well as a set of useful classroom exercises and ideas for events. We hope that our suggested activities to mark National Sorry Day and the Apology Anniversary will be both practical to implement and inspiring for your students.

We look forward to receiving your feedback on this resource, and on our work with schools more generally, as we endeavour to develop our capacity to support you in your work teaching Australia's students about the history of the Stolen Generations.

*This significant educational resource developed by the National Sorry Day Committee supports our teachers and encourages our children to undertake activities that respect and celebrate National Sorry Day and the Anniversary of the Apology.*

*By using this resource, our school communities can begin to discuss and understand the Stolen Generations and the lasting effects of the past policies that removed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. There are immeasurable benefits to our community and our children when we learn about and acknowledge the history of our country and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.*

*I encourage teachers, students and school communities to use this resource to develop activities that challenge and inspire our learning.*

**Mick Gooda**

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
Social Justice Commissioner**

Commissioner Mick Gooda and supporters  
commemorating National Sorry Day 2010, Sydney

Photo by Wayne Quilliam



## Who are the Stolen Generations?

**The Stolen Generations are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults who as children were forcibly removed from their families, communities and cultures under State Territory and Federal laws between the 1800s and the 1970s**

# Acknowledgements

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The NSDC would also like to acknowledge the late Dr Jimmy Little AO (1937-2012), Dr Tom Calma AO, Commissioner Mick Gooda, the Honourable Linda Burney MP and Senator Rachel Siewert for their endorsements and ongoing support. We wish to also acknowledge the contribution from the Honourable Ken Wyatt MP, and to thank the school students who contributed their thoughts on their education: Liarnah Jones, Jessie Simon-Fitzpatrick, Caleb Jones, Dindima Huckle-Moran and Yasmin Grey.

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The NSDC would also like to acknowledge the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA), the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), and each State and Territory Department of Education for their support for a national curriculum that recognises teaching the history of the Stolen Generations as an important part of educating students on Australia's full history.

The NSDC was able to make this resource a reality thanks to funding it received from the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA). NSDC would also like to acknowledge the ongoing funding it receives from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA).



The Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples


Photo by NSDC

"This Resource provides teachers and schools with information, ideas and resources to allow them to work effectively, age-appropriately and sensitively with the important issues around the Stolen Generations.

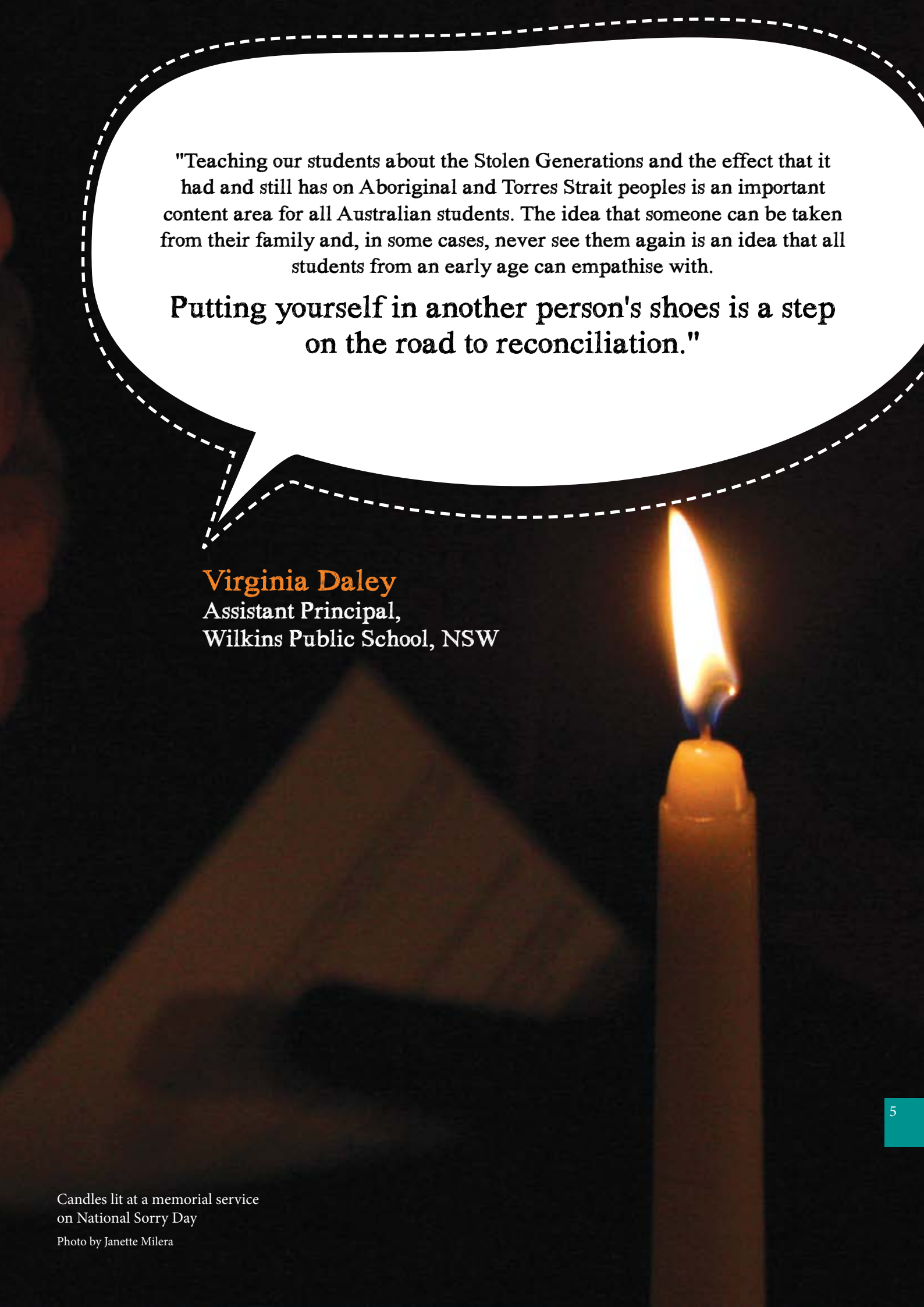
The resource will support schools where potentially differing views on this issue are held, and give teachers the confidence to work with this issue with their community."

**Jo Padgham**  
Former Principal,  
Ainslie Primary School, ACT



A close-up photograph of a hand holding a lit red candle and a lit matchstick. The background is dark, and the light from the candle and matchstick illuminates the hand and the surrounding area. The candle is lit, and the matchstick is also lit, with a small flame at the tip. The hand is positioned on the right side of the frame, holding the candle and matchstick. The overall mood is somber and reflective.

**We dedicate this resource to the Stolen Generations. Our hope is that this resource will help to educate current and future generations on the realities of the forcible removal policies, and their impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities across the country.**



"Teaching our students about the Stolen Generations and the effect that it had and still has on Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples is an important content area for all Australian students. The idea that someone can be taken from their family and, in some cases, never see them again is an idea that all students from an early age can empathise with.

**Putting yourself in another person's shoes is a step on the road to reconciliation."**

**Virginia Daley**  
Assistant Principal,  
Wilkins Public School, NSW



"At my primary school, every year we hold a National Sorry Day assembly that is organised by Stage 2 and 3 students<sup>1</sup> and a few teachers. Each class is given the opportunity to make a presentation and it is open to all our parents and friends. We invite Elders from our local Aboriginal communities, people from local government, politicians and the education department. It is an important day to respect our past heritage and reflect on some of the ups and downs we, as Australians, have gone through. It is a day of commemoration for people of our past generations and a day of leadership and showing our respect to the ones that survived."

**Jessie Simon-Fitzpatrick**  
Aboriginal Student



Ainslie Primary School Choir performing 'Sorry Song', at the 1st Anniversary of the Apology, Canberra, 2009

Photo by Wayne Quilliam





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# 1. Introduction for Teachers and School Leaders

In January 2012, the NSDC welcomed the Australian Curriculum, Assessments and Reporting Authority's (ACARA) announcement that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures would form one of three cross curriculum priorities, alongside Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia, and Sustainability, and that the history of the Stolen Generations would be taught as part of the Australian Curriculum's history learning area at age appropriate levels from Year 3 to Year 10 throughout the country by 2014.

The NSDC identified the need to support teachers unfamiliar with the history of the Stolen Generations to teach this history in their classrooms, and to better equip teachers to carry out school events that mark dates of significance such as the Apology Anniversary (13 February), National Sorry Day (26 May), National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week.

The NSDC consulted teaching professionals from across the country in order to better understand how to develop a teaching resource that would deliver this kind of support to teachers. The document you are now reading is a direct result of this consultation.

This resource is designed to provide you with easy-to-reference background information, offering practical advice, tips and suggestions on how to develop appropriate classroom activities and events, and to support your existing teaching resources when preparing **Art, History, Society and Culture** or **English** lessons for students of all ages.

The NSDC recognises that in order for students to achieve the best learning outcomes, teachers need to have access to resources that help them to create challenging and inspiring experiences for their students, simultaneously enhancing their own professional development.

In particular, this resource provides insight into the background and importance of **National Sorry Day** (26 May) (see page 14) and the **Apology Anniversary** (13 February) (see page 28). For each of these days there are ideas and suggestions for running successful school events, followed by detailed sections with age-appropriate teaching materials to support classroom learning.

**There are times when you may feel in need of support when preparing and teaching lessons or planning events on the topic of the Stolen Generations.**



Photo by Gilimbaa





## 2. How to Use This Resource

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Since first developing the initial outline for this resource, the NSDC has sought and received support, input and advice from teachers and educators from across the country, helping us to create the kind of resource that we hope will be of real use when teaching the history of the Stolen Generations.

Since the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) announced key changes to the new history curriculum in January 2012, with an increased focus on the importance of marking National Sorry Day and the Apology Anniversary and on the importance of learning about the history of the Stolen Generations, we have recognised how important it is to be able to support teachers in rising to this new challenge.

We recommend therefore that this resource is considered in this context and used alongside existing educational resources and new history curriculum content.

The resource starts out with an overview of the key dates and landmarks in our recent history that will help teachers and students to visualise the timeline and history of the Stolen Generations.

We then go on to introduce some of the most significant dates in the calendar to the Stolen Generations and to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities more generally. In addition to the Apology Anniversary (13 February), National Sorry Day (26 May), we also introduce important events such as National Reconciliation Week (27 May - 3 June) and NAIDOC Week (first Sunday in July - second Sunday in July).

Much of the content that follows on from here has been designed to support teachers in educating their students about the history and significance of National Sorry Day and the Apology Anniversary in the classroom and when holding events to mark these occasions. It has also been presented at age appropriate level, and has been supplemented by a detailed list of resources and links, additional historical information and a glossary provided as appendices.

We hope that you will find the resource easy to read, and that the icons and colours that we have used prove useful when navigating the different teaching materials and content areas.

### Icons to help guide you through this resource:



More Resources +  
Further Reading



Events + Activities



Caution  
Tread carefully



Music Resource



Online  
Resource

You  
Tube

Available on  
YouTube

### 3. Summary of Stolen Generations and Reconciliation Key Dates

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**1997**

*Bringing them home* Report tabled on 26 May, following a two year national inquiry

**2000**

Over 300,000 people crossed the Sydney Harbour Bridge, with 'Sorry' in the sky overhead, as part of the Bridge Walks for Reconciliation held around Australia

**1998**

First Sorry Day held (26 May) and the National Sorry Day Committee formed (also on 26 May)

**2008**

The Australian Parliament's Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples, and in particular to the Stolen Generations, 13 February

**1800s-1970s**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children forcibly removed from their families and communities

**2010**

The Stolen Generations Working Partnership launched on National Sorry Day in Canberra

"It is very important that our children learn about the history of Stolen Generations and the terrible impacts such practices had on Aboriginal peoples' lives. The Anniversary of the Apology and Sorry Day are days that are critical in the journey of healing for Stolen Generations and should be recognised in school events. I believe that this resource will assist teachers to teach in a positive and age-appropriate way a subject area which requires a high degree of sensitivity."

**Senator Rachel Siewert**  
Federal Parliament

## 4. Helping you Plan Ahead with your School Calendar

There are a number of days throughout the school year that acknowledge significant historical events associated with the Stolen Generations. These are explained below, alongside key dates that serve to celebrate and promote reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and other Australians, and that celebrate and promote the cultures and histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

### 13 February

#### The Apology Anniversary

A day to celebrate the Australian Parliament's Apology to the Indigenous Peoples of Australia, and in particular to the Stolen Generations, as a positive step toward reconciliation and healing.

- ✓ Our school event (date and description)
- ✓ How we will involve local community and parents
- ✓ How we will embed this day into teaching and learning activities
- ✓ See page 30

### 26 May

#### National Sorry Day

A day of remembrance and commemoration held to highlight the impact of past policies of forcible removal on the Stolen Generations, their families, and communities.

- ✓ Our school event (date and description)
- ✓ How we will involve local community and parents
- ✓ How we will embed this day into teaching and learning activities
- ✓ See page 16

You will find a list of points under each date that you may wish to consider when reflecting on the kinds of events that you will organise, and who you will want involved.

Later in this resource you will also find a range of practical ideas to help you plan school events for National Sorry Day (see page 16) and the Apology Anniversary (see page 30).

**Why not put these key dates into your calendar now, and start making plans to acknowledge them?**





"Teachers will welcome this useful tool, with its practical ideas on how to tackle this sensitive subject. Anything that helps our busy and usually overworked teachers to find a practical approach to this difficult and often-overlooked aspect of our history will be welcomed in the workplace"

**Margaret Evans**

Retired Literature and Music Teacher

## 27 May to 3 June

### National Reconciliation Week

A week that begins with the anniversary of the 1967 referendum (27 May) and ends with the anniversary of the historic Mabo native title decision (3 June). The aim of this week is to celebrate and reflect on the relationships between Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and the broader Australian community.

- ✓ Our school event (date and description)
- ✓ How we will involve local community and parents
- ✓ How we will embed this day into teaching and learning activities
- ✓ See page 20

## Beginning of July

### NAIDOC Week

A week to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

- ✓ Our school event (date and description)
- ✓ How we will involve local community and parents
- ✓ How we will embed this day into teaching and learning activities
- ✓ See [www.naidoc.org.au](http://www.naidoc.org.au)

## Why is it important to honour these days of significance?

- Honouring National Sorry Day and the Apology Anniversary helps to build deeper and more trusting relationships between schools and their communities, and between teachers and their students, especially those that identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
- It is an integral part of a child's education (and part of the Australian Curriculum from Year 3 onwards).
- It is a personal and professional journey for teachers and school leaders.
- It is a way in which all of us, as part of the broader Australian community, can understand the importance of these days not only to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, but to everyone that lives in Australia.

While these dates represent fantastic opportunities to celebrate and commemorate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and the Stolen Generations, it is also important to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives across your curriculum throughout the year, for example by using real life stories to support your teaching. It is also important that you engage with your local community not only in the lead up to these significant dates, but also throughout the year when planning lessons that consider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.

Try to embed real life stories and perspectives of your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members across your curriculum throughout the year.



## 5. National Sorry Day (26 May) Background

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**TIP: The following text could be read out as an official acknowledgement at your National Sorry Day event or assembly, or it could be included in your school newsletter as a written extract.**

National Sorry Day is a very significant day for Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and particularly for Stolen Generations survivors. The idea of holding a 'Sorry Day' was first mentioned as one of the 54 recommendations of the *Bringing them home* Report, which was tabled in Parliament on 26 May 1997. This report was the result of a two year National Inquiry into the forcible removal and of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, communities and cultural identity. This removal and separation was carried out under Federal, State and Territory laws and policies from the 1800s to the 1970s.

The children who were removed are recognised today as the Stolen Generations. Many of the Stolen Generations alive today are parents and grandparents.

**Almost every Aboriginal family (and some Torres Strait Islander families) today can identify the loss of family members due to the forcible removal policies.**

The children who were removed and separated from their families grew up without an understanding of traditional knowledge and culture and without a sense of connection to the land and country where they were born. This disconnection from their families, ancestors, communities and culture has had a lasting and negative effect on the wellbeing and identity of Stolen Generations survivors, and has had an intergenerational impacts on their children and families. It is likely that these effects will continue into the future.

On 26 May 1998 the first Sorry Day was held in Sydney. It is now commemorated across Australia, with many schools and thousands of people participating in memorials and commemorative services and

events, in honour of the Stolen Generations.

### **More about the word 'sorry'**

The word 'sorry' is used to express sorrow at the loss of a loved one by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, usually when that person passes away. The term 'Sorry Business' is used to describe the process of laying a loved one to rest.

It is important to understand that when using the word 'sorry' in the context of the Stolen Generations, the word represents the grief and loss experienced by the parents, families and communities of the children who were forcibly removed. Stolen Generations survivors themselves use the word 'sorry' when speaking of their loss as a result of their separation from their family, community, country and culture.

For Australians across the country, we use the word 'sorry' to show understanding and empathy toward someone who has lost someone special. For example, 'I'm sorry for your loss.'

When we meet to commemorate National Sorry Day, we do so by showing respect and remembrance in a similar way as when we meet on other days of historical significance, such as ANZAC Day. On National Sorry Day, we gather together to commemorate the Stolen Generations, their families and communities, celebrating their strength and survival and sharing in the process of healing and reconciliation.

The story of the Stolen Generations is a significant and important aspect of Australia's history. By teaching our children about this past through sensitive, age appropriate and encouraging learning activities. In doing so we widen their scope of understanding their country's history and stand to make a genuine and long lasting contribution toward the broader understanding of this history among other children and adults, and to the achievement of healing and reconciliation in the wider community.



## 6. Creating a Successful School Event for National Sorry Day (26 May)

School events that include students from all year levels are important, as they create opportunities for teachers, students, parents and community members to come together in an open, inclusive supportive environment. In this way, communities can also participate more closely in the learning journey.

Before planning your National Sorry Day school event, it is important to contact and consult the parents of your Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in particular on what would be the most appropriate way to commemorate National Sorry Day, with respect to the interests of local Stolen Generations survivors, the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and its Elders.

Your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Group, Indigenous Support Unit, and Local Reconciliation Group, as well as their State or Territory peak bodies, can provide guidance on how to do this if needed. The Board of Studies NSW has published a useful guide to working with Aboriginal communities, written especially for schools, educators and students, which is accessible at <http://ab-ed.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/files/working-with-aboriginal-communities.pdf>



### Our tips for preparing a great event



#### Engage with communities early on...

- Get to know the parents and families of your Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students by arranging and inviting them to a National Sorry Day planning meeting to coincide with morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea or an evening BBQ. Community Elders should also be invited where possible. It is important to leave enough time to plan, and to involve local families and community members from the start. This will help to enrich your event and achieve meaningful and effective community consultation and engagement. **This is a very important step.**
- You could also try to invite Stolen Generations survivors from your local area as guests of honour at your National Sorry Day event, seeking their advice during the planning process. You may wish to contact a Stolen Generations focused service or group in your area such as your local Link-Up Family Reunification Services. You can also contact the National Sorry Day Committee for advice and suggestions.

✓ Our community planning date(s) and details:

.....  
.....

Children holding framed photos of their Stolen Generations ancestors in the Members' Hall, Parliament House, during Commissioner Tom Calma's response to the Apology on 13 February 2008

Photo by Paul Oliver



**Caution for Teachers:** It is important to be aware of, and sensitive to, the trauma associated with the Stolen Generations and the ongoing impact this has on individuals and communities. As people share their personal stories and others learn more about our shared histories, strong emotions can cause distress.

## A 'whole' experience is best



We recommend that you aim to achieve the following three elements when holding your National Sorry Day event, so as to **ensure that your event has depth and honesty as well as an uplifting end and sense of hope for the future:**

1. Remember the Stolen Generations and the forcible removal policies as a difficult but important part of our shared history (the past);
2. Experience healing by exchanging stories and participating in a National Sorry Day ceremony as a school community (the present); and
3. Discuss shared hopes for the future of the Stolen Generations and their families, and encourage empathy and understanding among students, teachers and all in attendance (the future).

✓ How we will reflect these three elements in our event:  
.....  
.....  
.....

## Form of the event



You could hold a **National Sorry Day assembly, ceremony, concert, picnic or storytelling in class**. Remember to talk to your students, their parents, other teachers, and where possible Stolen Generations survivors and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, as everyone will have their own ideas.

Seek advice about what has happened in the past as well as the community's suggested improvements to ensure ongoing dynamic learning builds deeper understanding each year.

✓ Our ideas for the form of the event:  
.....  
.....  
.....

**remember the past  
experience the present  
express hope for the future**

## Some ideas to help you

- Either a Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgement of Country must take place before an event can begin. A definition of these terms can be found in the glossary section on pages 48 and 49 of this resource, and a more detailed explanation and further information to help you arrange either a Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgement of Country can be found here <https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/dethome/yr2005/welcomecountry.pdf>, and here [http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/downloads/approach/indigenous\\_p001\\_0802.pdf](http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/downloads/approach/indigenous_p001_0802.pdf);
- Consider including as part of the opening of your National Sorry Day event (after the Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement of Country) the National Sorry Day background material that we provide on pages 14 and 15 of this resource;
- There are a number of commemorative elements that



**Check with the community members during the planning stage as to what is appropriate.**

It is important not to assume that what is appropriate in one community will be appropriate in another.

It is also important to make sure that there are opportunities for teachers, students and community members to share their feelings, reflect on what they have learnt, discuss how they feel and debrief more generally.

you could integrate into your National Sorry Day events as appropriate, that would help contribute toward healing and reconciliation, such as:

- 'Smoking Ceremony', in order to cleanse the area and harmonise the energy of everyone present. This should be led by a locally respected and appropriate local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community member;
- A minute's silence, to remember the Stolen Generations;
- A flag raising ceremony (to either full or half-mast), where the Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, and the Australian Flags are raised, to show the respect that the event has for all Australian peoples;
- Light candles for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were taken away;

## Some ideas to help you

- Speak to the parents of your students about holding a parade whereby these students carry images they have created for the day, or photos of their Elders and grandparents while playing Stolen Generations music. Whilst all students should be encouraged to participate, an appropriate distinction should be made for those whose family members or ancestors identify as Stolen Generations survivors;
- Play some of the Stolen Generations music and songs with messages of healing recommended later in this resource (e.g., Archie Roach's 'Took the Children Away') and encourage your students to develop a dance or performance to convey the meaning;
- Play the Nomad Apology clip (It's time), a powerful clip, that will help motivate and inspire those in attendance ; and/or
- Visit a local site of historical significance for the Stolen Generations. We recommend you speak to the parents of your Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students when identifying places of significance.

Include a community activity that students, teachers, parents and community members can participate in together. For example:

- The Stolen Generations Track Home activity. Teachers can either purchase sets of 12 or 54 Track Home Feet (cut outs of feet that come with short spikes that can be planted in the ground e.g., on a school lawn or affixed to a wall) from the NSDC's website, or set an activity for students whereby they make their own Track Home Feet. The Track Home Feet should be red, black, yellow, blue, green and white, so as to represent the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags. We recommend teachers work with students to arrange the Track Home Feet so that they form a symbolic track or path, that represents both the tracks that were left by people, trucks, trains, camels and cars involved in taking children from their families, as well as the 'journey home' or 'journey of healing' that Stolen Generations survivors embark on.

- A mural or a piece of artwork created by students from across a school year would serve as a positive and creative way of marking National Sorry Day. Parents of students can also get involved with ideas and suggestions, and we recommend that messages of justice, unity, healing, and reconciliation be integrated into the artwork or mural. Your Principal could unveil the artwork or mural alongside the students involved on National Sorry Day itself.
- Encourage your students to write their own messages of remembrance and commemoration for the Stolen Generations on a message board. Message boards can be made at school on the theme of the Stolen Generations, their families they were forced to leave behind or their return home, and will help your students to connect and empathise with these issues.
- Make a wordle or use words to represent feelings, memories or what you would like to say to someone affected by these government policies and their implementation.
- Create a space for everyone (including community, students and educators) to express their emotions, write or draw how they feel and encourage them to share their thoughts and emotions in a sharing circle or safe environment (debriefing and monitoring everyone in the group to ensure the nurturing environment is maintained and they are sent out safely at the event's conclusion).
- Create a Pledge Book (see page 49 for details) or video clip that provides students with an opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings about the Stolen Generations. The Pledge Book or video clip can then be presented to an appropriate and respected local representative of the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community, or to a Stolen Generations survivor. By visiting the NSDC website you will be able to find out how to create a Pledge Book and how to register it.
- Consider developing a performance or play. If there is a student dance group at your school, or if you can think of a particularly talented singer or drama group, try to involve them in advance in preparing a performance that looks to either commemorate the past or look forward to future justice, healing and reconciliation.



Track Home Feet at Weetangera Primary School, ACT, in acknowledgement of the Journey of Healing following the Apology.


Photo by Lynn Price

## The Stolen Generations Track Home activity



Sets of the 12 or 54 feet can be purchased from the NSDC's merchandise webpage or you can create your own. [www.nsd.org.au](http://www.nsd.org.au)



A photograph of a field of green grass with numerous colorful handprints (Track Home Feet) planted in the ground. The handprints are in various colors including red, yellow, blue, white, black, and green. A red speech bubble is overlaid on the image, containing a quote. The background is a dense field of these handprints stretching towards the horizon.

"I think ways of helping teachers to teach children about Stolen Generations history and the importance of Sorry Day and the Apology Anniversary is for children to learn about Aboriginal words, to use books like 'The Burnt Stick', to discuss the Stolen Generations, to sing songs for Sorry Day and to have people come and talk to the class..."

**Yasmin Gray**  
non-Indigenous Student

Track Home Feet planted in the ground for National Sorry Day in Sydney 2010 at the 10 year anniversary of Corroboree 2000

Photo by Wayne Quilliam



## Linking up National Sorry Day and National Reconciliation Week

National Sorry Day (26 May) is about remembering and commemorating the Stolen Generations, and recognising how this history continues to affect so many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

National Reconciliation Week (27 May-3 June) represents an opportunity for all Australians to learn about this country's shared histories, cultures and achievements, and to explore how relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and other Australians can be strengthened, in order to build momentum for national reconciliation.

Both National Sorry Day and National Reconciliation Week are of great importance, providing your schools with opportunities to build understanding about the challenges facing the Stolen Generations, as

well as the challenges facing the broader Australian population in terms of the need for reconciliation. Acknowledging both these occasions will greatly enhance whole school community relationships.

Remember to reflect on how your National Sorry Day events will lead into your National Reconciliation Week activities.

We recommend adding your planned National Sorry Day and National Reconciliation Week events to your school **Reconciliation Action Plans**, so that your colleagues and students recognise how the two events are interconnected. To find out more about Reconciliation Action Plans, and about planning events to celebrate National Reconciliation Week, you can contact Reconciliation Australia at [www.reconciliation.org.au](http://www.reconciliation.org.au)

### A short word from Dr Tom Calma AO, Co-Chair of Reconciliation Australia, National Coordinator for Tackling Indigenous Smoking and Former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner

*I am writing to lend my support for the NSDC's School Resource, an important resource for our schools to develop great events and learning about the Stolen Generations.*

*National Sorry Day is a time of reflection, acknowledging the past and celebrating the resilience of Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous cultures. National Sorry Day is not just for the Stolen Generations - it is for every Australian. Let us feel proud that - as a nation - we respect our fellow citizens, we care for their plight and we offer our hand in friendship so that we may all enjoy the bounty of*

*this great nation. Let us admire that despite facing numerous challenges and cultural transformation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and cultures have demonstrated remarkable strengths and resilience.*

*Our culture lives with us in our everyday life and provides guidance for the future in living our dream. As the National Coordinator for Tackling Indigenous*

*Smoking I want to emphasise that it is up to us, and future generations, to close the gap in Indigenous life expectancy and carry on and grow our cultures - to live and experience safe, healthy, smoke-free lives. Stay strong and protect our future.*



### GET ONLINE

Register your event on the NSDC website and afterwards upload your National Sorry Day photos.

**"As a former school teacher myself, I am committed to working with school communities. I believe that Aboriginal history and culture must become an integral part of every Australian child's school experience. This educational resource by the National Sorry Day Committee is a valuable document, one that I feel is imperative that all have access to."**

**The Hon Linda Burney MP**  
Member for Canterbury



**Consider how your National Sorry Day events will lead into your National Reconciliation Week activities**





## 7. National Sorry Day (26 May): Teaching Materials to Support Classroom Learning

### Early Years: Foundation to Mid Primary

National Sorry Day and the importance of learning about the past, as a way of understanding the present and creating a positive future



#### Background

As children, we sometimes hear stories from our parents or grandparents about what life was like for them when they were growing up as children and as teenagers. We know from our own experiences that these stories can make us feel happy or sad, provoking strong emotions for us.

We learn about important events that have shaped our country's history, through stories told to us by our families and teachers, and through what we read in books and watch on films. Some events that we hear about took place hundreds or even thousands of years ago, or perhaps within the lifetime of our parents or grandparents.

Sometimes people meet up with family members and friends to remember significant or sad events, and some have stories to share about these events. We sometimes come together to remember the people who fought in wars, or sad events that affected our communities (e.g., floods and bushfires). We learn about these stories at school so that we can pay

respect to those people who were affected by them, and so that we can learn lessons from what happened and from the mistakes that were made; and so that we can work to make sure the events that caused the most sadness never happen again.

On National Sorry Day (26 May each year) people come together to remember a very sad story - one about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were taken from their families over many years, because of their race, by government agencies and church missions. These children, now adults, are known as the Stolen Generations.

As adults, many of the Stolen Generations are still trying to find their families, and are trying to connect with their traditional cultures and communities. Many still feel very sad when looking back at the time when they were taken away from their families because they were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

It is called National Sorry Day, as the word 'sorry' is very significant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples when thinking about sad events, difficult times, or what is sometimes called 'sorry business'. On National Sorry Day, Australians from across the country come together to pay their respects to the Stolen Generations, and to remember their loss and the sadness that they and many other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders continue to face.

Track Home Feet can be planted by students on commemorative dates

Photo by NSDC



## Reflection:

### Questions for students about National Sorry Day (26 May)

1. Why do people come together to remember and think about sad stories from the past?
2. Who are the Stolen Generations? What does the term 'Stolen Generations' mean?
3. What stories and events do people remember on National Sorry Day (26 May)?
4. Why do you think it might be important to remember what happened to the Stolen Generations on National Sorry Day and at other times of the year?



Local school children commemorating National Sorry Day by participating in a community bridge walk in Canberra, 2012

Photo by NSDC



### Student Activities

- Create a calendar that shows dates that are important to you and your family. Speak to teachers and classmates about other dates or events that might be important to the Stolen Generations and to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples more generally. Create a calendar that shows these dates and events.
- Create a representation, such as a drawing, of your home and the people you live with. Share what home and family means to you and think about what is special about your own family or your home environment.

### Teacher Activities

- Invite an appropriate and respected Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander parent or local Elder into your classroom to speak to your students about the Stolen Generations and the importance of commemorating National Sorry Day. The NSDC recommends you talk to this person beforehand, and negotiate what

they are willing to share. Discuss whether it is appropriate to provide a payment or reimbursement for time and travel.

- Consider either reading from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander story, or showing a short animated film. 'Aboriginal Dreaming Stories', as compiled by Jackie Miers, is a useful online resource that includes reference to the importance of family and community.
- Read a Stolen Generations storybook with your students, that is appropriate for their age level (see page 43 of this resource for ideas and suggestions). Discuss the key messages of the story with your students, encouraging them to reflect on how they might feel if they were in the position of the children that were taken away. You may wish to suggest to your students that they create a piece of artwork or a mosaic as a group exercise, that brings to life some of the emotions and thoughts that the Stolen Generations as children may have experienced.

## 7. National Sorry Day (26 May): Teaching Materials to Support Classroom Learning

### Primary and Secondary Years

Who are the Stolen Generations?

Understanding and empathising with their experiences



#### Background

From the late 1800s to the 1970s, generations of children of mixed Aboriginal, and sometimes Torres Strait Islander, descent from across Australia were removed from their families and communities by government agents and church missions. This happened so that they could be raised as white children in residential institutions, training schools and farms, foster care and through adoption.

**Children were taken from remote communities, regional towns and big cities.** For years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families lived in fear that authorities would try to take their children. Parents often disguised or hid their children in order to prevent them from being taken.

Laws and policies passed by State, Territory and Federal governments called for the forcible removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children of mixed ancestry. An overriding motivation by the governments of the time was to stop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, families and communities from passing on their culture, language and identity to their children. Some children were illegally adopted out, whilst many, instead of receiving an education alongside other Australians, were trained as domestic servants and labourers and as young teenagers ended up working for little or no money. Later in life many of these children, who are now adults, told of the abuse that they received from their adopted families and from staff at the government institutions where they

lived. The children, their families and communities experienced a great deal of trauma and grief even after the children had grown up. These children are known as the Stolen Generations.

In 1997, the truth about the Stolen Generations was told in the *Bringing them home* Report, which presented the findings of the two year National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families.

This report featured the personal stories of over 700 adults who, as children, were forcibly removed from their families. Fifty-four recommendations were made that related to the need for an annual 'Sorry Day' to remember and commemorate the Stolen Generations; for compensation for the Stolen Generations; for apologies from State, Territory and Federal Governments; and for family tracing and reunification services, among others. In 2008, former Prime Minister, the Hon Kevin Rudd, moved a Motion of Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples in the House of Representatives on behalf of the Australian Parliament. This long awaited Apology was in response to Recommendation 5 of the *Bringing them home* Report: Acknowledgement and apology - Parliaments and police forces. It was a historic event, and has ongoing significance to Stolen Generations, the wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and many non-Indigenous Australians all around the country.





Most Aboriginal families have their own family story or connection to the Stolen Generations, as do some Torres Strait Islander families. It is important to remember that Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander families that you know already may have stories that they may or may not feel comfortable sharing about their experiences that relate to the Stolen Generations.

The experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being taken away from their

families have had profound and long-term negative impacts on the wellbeing of many communities across Australia that will likely take many years to mitigate, through positive efforts that promote healing and reconciliation. Remembering this past through sensitive, appropriate and supportive National Sorry Day events is one way that schools can make an effective contribution to their local community's healing process.

"Dear friends, from my personal experience with my own nieces and nephews I know how difficult it has been to reconnect the Little family. I saw them being taken away when I was young and I was also among those to be taken, but I was saved by my relatives. I had to hide in the bush and I know, had I become one of the Stolen Generations, my life would have been totally different. I strongly urge you to support the National Sorry Day Committee and their school resource so all young Australians can learn to understand what my Indigenous brothers and sisters went through during those terrible years. Bless you all."

**The late Dr Jimmy Little AO  
(1937 - 2012)**

**Musician, Advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and the Stolen Generations, and Ambassador for Literacy and Numeracy**

The late Dr Jimmy Little AO with a group of children in Milingimbi, Northern Territory

Photo by Sophie Howarth [www.sophiehowarthphotography.com](http://www.sophiehowarthphotography.com)

## Reflection: Personal Stories



Very sad stories have been shared from the real lived experiences of children who were taken away. They are powerful and reveal a little about the trauma and pain experienced under the care of Australian governments in our parents' and grandparents' lifetimes. What did these children miss out on? What do you think they worried about? We can't give them back those years or the parents they often never saw again; but what can we do to support them now?



**Reflect on and retell stories that really affect you as you learn about the sad things that happened to these children and how different their lives were when they were taken away.** Use art, poetry, drama, visual essays or discussion to reflect on these stories.



- Listen to music and spoken word, e.g.:
  - ‘Took the Children Away’ a song by Archie Roach on his album, Charcoal Lane
- Read poetry and quotes from Stolen Generations. The following poems can be accessed online in the [Us Taken-Away Kids](#) Report created by the Australian Human Rights Commission:
  - ‘The Warm Bed’ by Suzanne Nelson
  - Quote from Elaine Turnbull
  - ‘Little China Doll’ by Jeannie Hayes
  - ‘Let’s go home’ by Vickie Roach.



- Watch a film clip of an interview with a Stolen Generations survivor. They can be accessed online at the [Stolen Generations Testimonies website](#). Make sure you check the story is age-appropriate.
- Look at some of the photos in the *Bringing them home* Report or Us Taken-Away Kids Report and have students discuss what it may have been like to be the children in those photos. Read the statements on the cover of the [Us Taken-Away Kids](#) Report and ask how they make you feel. Explain some of the experiences and messages these peoples' stories reveal about the hurt they experienced or what they have missed out on, e.g., someone to cuddle at night.
- Include books written about the Stolen Generations or by a Stolen Generations survivor in your class reading.



- Set a task for your students to go to your school or local library to find resources they have on the Stolen Generations and local places of significance (e.g., a home, institution or memorial site) including oral histories. Alternatively, search the web and present your findings in a report or visual essay.

"I am an Aboriginal student and I go to primary school. I want to learn more about Aboriginal history and my culture. I know about Stolen Generations from my family, but not from school. I think it would be wrong if I have to wait until Year 10 and I think it would help other kids to know what I know. I am old enough to understand and so are they. "

**Caleb Jones**  
Aboriginal Student



## Teacher Activities



- Invite a Stolen Generations survivor or an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Elder or parent into the school to speak with the children. Talk to this person beforehand, and negotiate what will be covered and whether a payment is appropriate.
- Watch this clip from the feature film *Rabbit-Proof Fence*. This is the scene where children are dragged away from their mothers. This is a very intense scene so watch this first and gauge whether it is suitable for all your students. Work with your students to reflect on how being separated like this must have felt. Share the emotions you feel when watching this clip.

## Further Materials for Secondary Students



Learning about the Stolen Generations in more detail, and the *Bringing them home* Report and its historical and/or political significance.

The *Bringing them home Educational Package* available on the Australian Human Rights Commission website is a highly recommended classroom resource for secondary students (and late Primary in some schools). There are also other State-based resources (see Resources and Links in Appendix A).



We have also outlined below some additional recommended learning activities:

- Read out loud or learn and perform the play *STOLEN* about the Stolen Generations by Jane Harrison. Educational resources accompany this play.



For links and more information please see Appendix A.

## Student Activities

- Draw a picture, write a letter, or even make a short video with a message of support and commitment to healing for the Stolen Generations, and send a copy or email a link to the NSDC.
- Write a letter addressed to the Stolen Generations and to your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, letting them know about events and activities that you have carried out for National Sorry Day, what you feel they achieved and why you feel this was important. Ask your teachers about whom best to send the letter to locally.



• Watch this clip from the feature film *Rabbit-Proof Fence*. This is the scene where children are dragged away from their mothers. This is a very intense scene so watch this first and gauge whether it is suitable for all your students. Reflect on how being separated like this must have felt. Share the emotions you feel when watching this clip.

- Watch some of the interviews from the *Stolen Generations Testimonies* website or read personal stories direct from the *Bringing them home* Report. Think about ways that you can encourage your students to study each testimony or story and to consider the emotions and reactions that they may have experienced had they also undergone separation from their families under the same circumstances. Students can give oral or written responses, or could even draw, paint or act out their feelings and responses.



Note: teachers are advised to be cautious when carrying out this activity in recognition of any ongoing sensitivity to the family or living situations of students in the classroom.





## 8. The Apology Anniversary (13 February) Background

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**TIP: The following text could be read out as an official acknowledgement at your Apology Anniversary event or assembly, or could be included in your school newsletter as a written extract.**

In 1997, the *Bringing them home* Report recommended that all Australian Parliaments, police forces, churches and other involved non-government agencies officially publicly acknowledge their predecessors' responsibility for the laws, policies and practices of forcible removal. It was also recommended that apologies be offered, and that these be accompanied by appropriate reparations.

While all State and Territory parliaments then delivered their apologies between 1997 and 2001, the Federal Parliament at the time (led by then Prime Minister John Howard) refused to do so. This refusal caused a great deal of hurt for the Stolen Generations in particular, as well as for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People across Australia. It also triggered a community-led campaign for an apology, which gained significant momentum over the following decade.

When a new Australian Government was formed in 2007 it committed to delivering the Apology as its first item of Parliamentary business. The then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd moved a Motion of Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples in the House of Representatives on 13 February 2008, apologising for past laws, policies and practices that devastated Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, in particular the Stolen Generations. The

motion was supported by the Opposition and passed through both houses of Parliament. Stolen Generations survivors and their families were present in the Chamber to hear the Apology, and thousands more filled the Great Hall of Parliament House. Outside, a huge crowd flowed out onto the lawns to watch the Hon Kevin Rudd's speech on the big screens. The Apology was broadcast across Australia, bringing the country to a standstill, with people in their homes, workplaces, schools and at community gatherings stopping to watch the live broadcast.

**The Anniversary of this day, which generated so much good will and healing, is now celebrated every year by communities and schools across the country.**

As the first significant date of the year for the Stolen Generations in the school calendar, the Apology Anniversary on 13 February offers a positive and solid platform from which to launch lessons for the new school year on the history of the Stolen Generations and the importance of the Apology.

**"Knowledge of the Stolen Generations deserves to be taught in schools, it builds a greater understanding and aids acceptance."**

**Liarnah Jones**  
Aboriginal Student

## 9. Creating a Successful School Event for the Apology Anniversary (13 February)

The Apology Anniversary on 13 February falls within the first fortnight of the new school year. It provides a timely opportunity for school students to get to know each other, through working together to prepare and participate in an event that celebrates an important moment in Australia's recent history.

Celebrating the Apology Anniversary in this way will also provide teachers with an opportunity to encourage their students to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures more generally, and to welcome new Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students and their parents into the school community.

As with creating a successful event for National Sorry Day, it is important to involve the community in planning for this event. As the Apology Anniversary falls so soon after the start of the new school year, try to start planning and preparing for your Apology Anniversary celebrations towards the end of the previous calendar year (around November and December).




Local schools participating in a community bridge walk in Canberra

Photo by NSDC

### Some ideas for your event:



- Recognise the Anniversary in a special assembly. The parents of students, or older students, could be asked to reflect on what they remember from the day.
- Hold a special flag raising ceremony including the Australian, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags.
- Replay the [Apology](#) delivered by former Prime Minister the Hon Kevin Rudd. 
- Invite local Stolen Generations survivors to your school event as guests of honour, providing them with an opportunity to reflect on the significance of the date to them, and to say a few words in front of your school students, providing students with an opportunity to fully appreciate the relevance of the day in the broader context of learning about the Stolen Generations. When inviting Stolen Generations survivors to your event, and suggesting that they may wish to say a few words regarding the meaning of the day, make time to discuss what they would like to talk about at your event beforehand, and remember, sometimes guest speakers will require a payment for travel and their time.
- Encourage your students (and guests if appropriate) to plan and give a performance in celebration of the Apology. Speak to your Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, their parents, and relevant community members about appropriate cultural dances that could be performed. The NSDC can also put teachers in touch with other schools that have organised similar performances in the past.
- A culturally symbolic and appropriate ceremony can be held as a way of celebrating the Apology Anniversary. This can be created with the support of students and their parents. You may wish to play the 'Apology – it's time' clip by the Nomad Two World's Project.





Stolen Generations Memorial in  
Reconciliation Place, Canberra

Photo by Janette Milera



**Create a special ceremony  
or remembrance wall**



# 10. The Apology Anniversary (13 February): Teaching Materials to Support Classroom Learning

## Early Years: Foundation to Mid Primary

### Why is the Apology important?



### Reflection

You may want to play some footage from the Apology (see the Film section of Appendix A for links to the entire motion). **The Australian Parliament's Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples was a very significant event that 'stopped the nation'.** All over Australia, people stopped to watch the Apology on television, including in schools. Thousands of people travelled to Parliament House in Canberra to witness the occasion and to celebrate with friends and family.



Some questions that you might want to ask your students as part of your lesson:

- Why did so many Australians stop to watch and listen to the Apology?
- Why do you think it might be an important day to remember for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and for the Stolen Generations?
- Why do you think it might be an important day to remember for other Australians?
- Think of times when you have apologised to someone. Why was it important for your friendship to say sorry? What did you feel before and after your apology? When you said sorry, did you also offer to make amends? Did you promise to do things differently or change in some way?
- What feelings do you have when you are waiting for someone to say they are sorry to you? Do you feel differently once they have said sorry?

A local primary school student selects the Australian and Aboriginal flags as his face paint design at a commemorative event in Canberra

Photo by NSDC







## Learning Activities



- Create a calendar that shows dates that are important to you and your family.
- Speak to your teachers and classmates about other dates or events that might be important to the Stolen Generations and to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples more generally. Create a calendar that shows these dates and events.
- Invite a Stolen Generations member or another Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander parent, Elder or community member into your classroom to speak with your students about the Stolen Generations and the importance of celebrating the Apology Anniversary, and of the importance of remembering the need to follow up an apology like this with positive action. The NSDC recommends that you talk to this person beforehand, and discuss what they are willing to talk about, especially relating to potentially sensitive issues. Discuss whether it is appropriate to provide a payment or reimbursement for time and travel.



# 10. The Apology Anniversary (13 February): Teaching Materials to Support Classroom Learning

## Primary and Secondary Years

Why is the Apology important?



### Reflection One:

Extract from the Apology motion, 13 February 2008<sup>2</sup>

“We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country.

For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, **we say sorry.**

To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, **we say sorry.**

And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, **we say sorry.**

We the Parliament of Australia respectfully request that this apology be received in the spirit in which it is offered as part of the healing of the nation...

We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians.”

<sup>2</sup> Rudd K. Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples. Australia, House of Representatives 2008, *Debates*, No. 1, 13 Feb 2008: 167-173. <http://www.aph.gov.au/binaries/hansard/reps/dailys/dr130208.pdf> (accessed May 2013).



Some questions that you might want to ask your students as part of your lesson:

- How did your family members feel when the Australian Parliament finally said ‘sorry’ to the Stolen Generations in 2008? Ask your parents or other family members about their understandings of why the Hon Kevin Rudd made the Apology so soon after becoming Prime Minister. What does it reveal about his intentions? Where were they when the Apology was made and what did it mean to them? Do you remember it? Where were you at the time? What did it mean to you?
- Why do you think so many Australians who were watching the Apology cried tears of sadness and joy?
- Why did then Prime Minister, the Hon Kevin Rudd, call the Apology the “first step”? What does this mean?
- If the Apology was the first step, what might the Stolen Generations want the next steps to be? Set a project or research activity to answer this question.



Paints for contributing to a collective artwork at a commemorative event - creative and visual arts are a great way to engage students and community members

Photo by NSDC

- Set up a **Wonder Wall** - a wall space that promotes inquiry into a topic where students can display their ‘wonderings’ or questions. This could be made using several large pieces of paper of different colours with room for students to attach their responses. For example, you might write ‘Today we remembered the Apology that was made to Australia’s Indigenous Peoples, and what this meant to the Stolen Generations. I wonder...’

The students will then need to be asked to create statements that begin with ‘I wonder...’ For example:

‘I wonder why the government said sorry in 2008 and not before.’

‘I wonder what has happened since the Apology to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and the Stolen Generations.’

‘I wonder what it would be like to be separated from your family for so many years.’

‘I wonder how the parents of the children who were taken away felt for all those years.’

‘I wonder why I haven’t heard anything much about the Stolen Generations on television or in school before.’

As part of this exercise, the children write their names on the back of their wonderings, which they write on separate pieces of paper or card and then stick to the Wonder Wall. This exercise will help the teacher to gauge the extent to which the students have really engaged in some of the issues associated with the Apology and with the Stolen Generations.



## SET UP A WONDER WALL!

**It will encourage and value your students' analysis, thoughts and reflections.**

## Reflection Two:

The then Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, **Dr Tom Calma AO**, who responded to the Apology on behalf of the Stolen Generations, said in his speech,<sup>3</sup>

**"it is important to listen with an open mind and heart"**

**You  
Tube**

You can listen to his full speech [here](#):

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxHw1KK\\_gNw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxHw1KK_gNw)

It is important for educators to reflect on the Apology and then Commissioner Calma's response. Analyse the words that he used in his speech, and reflect on their meaning and significance. Think about how we can honour their intent and ensure greater understanding is reached as we incorporate these events into our teaching and learning programs.



Having played the speech you might encourage students to also reflect on how their own appreciation of the significance of the Apology may have shifted as a result of the activities you have undertaken.

Working in pairs or small groups, two columns on a large piece of white or coloured paper could be drawn, with the first column titled 'I used to think...' and with the second column titled 'I now think...'. Students can then be encouraged to write and compare how they felt about the Apology and its significance before and after hearing Dr Calma AO's response.

Secondary students could also analyse the Apology transcript or listen again to the footage and unpack and represent its important messages through reflective art or writing and then share their understandings and representations with other class members.

The Australian Curriculum has developed Achievement Standards for each year group from Foundation to Year 10 to help teachers assess their students' progress – these can be found at <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/History/Curriculum/F-10>

<sup>3</sup>Calma, T. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner. Let the healing begin: Response to government to the national apology to the Stolen Generations, 13 Feb 2008. Canberra: Member's Hall, Australian Parliament House. [http://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/content/word/social\\_justice/speech/let\\_the\\_healing\\_begin.doc](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/content/word/social_justice/speech/let_the_healing_begin.doc) (accessed May 2013).









## 11. Where to from here?

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# Education, Health and Wellbeing

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In the following section of this resource, we explore the diverse range of inspiring initiatives that are actively being implemented across Australia which aim to improve educational, health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults and children.

To learn about and understand the history of the Stolen Generations, it is important to also be able to understand the impact that the forcible removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children has had on the health and wellbeing of families and communities across the country.

For many years Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities have been exposed to systemic racism, displacement from their land and country, and a widening gap in education and health outcomes compared to other Australians.

However, due to a shift in thinking by Federal, State and Territory governments, and an increase in resourcing of community-led initiatives to challenge concerns surrounding education, health and wellbeing outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and youth, improvements are being seen.

Positive social and emotional wellbeing, safety, nutrition and healthy lifestyles are crucial in order for children to develop into healthy, successful and happy adults.

You may wish to read about the following campaigns and organisations and integrate some of the information, where appropriate, into your lessons about the Stolen Generations and when planning events to commemorate National Sorry Day, and to celebrate the Apology Anniversary, National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week.

## The Close the Gap Campaign

Mr Mick Gooda and Dr Tom Calma AO are the current Co-Chairs of the Close the Gap Campaign. The Close the Gap Campaign was initiated in 2006 with the aim of closing the gap in health and life expectancy between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and other Australians. The estimated gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians of around 10-17 years, and the likelihood that Indigenous children under five will die at a rate three times that of their non-Indigenous counterparts, can no longer be tolerated,

especially in light of Australia's prosperity. The prevention of chronic disease, and the risks associated with chronic disease, is critical to closing the gap in life expectancy. The Indigenous Chronic Disease Package is encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults and youth to adopt healthier lifestyles, as well as working to improve awareness of risk factors and increase access to services which promote better health and wellbeing. One element of this package concerns the need to tackle Indigenous smoking.

[http://www.humanrights.gov.au/social\\_justice/health/ctg\\_community.html](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/social_justice/health/ctg_community.html)

<http://www.health.gov.au/tackling-chronic-disease>

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ctg/publishing.nsf/Content/ctg-gp-kit-annual-progress-report-toc~ctg-gp-kit-annual-progress-report-key-achievements>

## The Indigenous Literacy Foundation

The Indigenous Literacy Foundation (ILF) works to raise literacy levels and improve the lives and opportunities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children living in remote and isolated regions. The Foundation provides books and literacy resources to communities, and works to raise awareness of Indigenous literacy issues. The Foundation is an initiative of the Australian Book Industry, and works with the support of the Australian Publishers Association, the Australian Booksellers Association and the Australian Society of Authors.

<http://www.indigenouliteracyfoundation.org.au/>

## Jimmy Little's Thumbs Up! Schools Program

The Thumbs Up! Schools Program is an initiative of the Jimmy Little Foundation which is aimed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 5-16. Foundation staff travel to remote areas of the country to visit school children and promote healthy eating education and information in partnership with local stores and local health services. The Foundation works to establish an environment of creativity, using music and new media workshops in order to communicate key messages.

<http://www.jlf.org.au/thumbs-up-schools-program/>



# Education, Health and Wellbeing

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## Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC)

The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) is a national non-government peak body in Australia, which seeks to represent the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. SNAICC runs a number of projects and has produced a series of resources that strive to improve the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and youth, promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural strengths, and support vulnerable families to prevent children from entering the child protection system and losing contact with their families, communities and cultures. SNAICC has a broad membership base including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-based child care agencies, family support services and foster care agencies.

<http://www.snaicc.asn.au>

The National Sorry Day Committee would like to take this opportunity to fully acknowledge the endorsement and support for this resource by the late Dr Jimmy Little AO, who sadly passed away on 2 April 2012.

Uncle Jimmy was a true humanitarian and philanthropist, whose work to promote healthy living and healthy eating education through the Thumbs Up! Schools Program was driven by a lasting and genuine desire to improve opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children across Australia and to help them to lead healthy and productive lives.

In our hearts Uncle will always remain a treasured Aboriginal Australian who will be sorely missed by the members and staff of the National Sorry Day Committee.

## Australian Human Rights Commission

The Australian Human Rights Commission advocates for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and 'works to promote respect and understanding of these rights among the broader community'.

Mick Gooda, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner advocates the need to address cyber-bullying and bullying in schools in the Commission's Social Justice Report 2011, highlighting the importance of social and emotional wellbeing amongst young people, in consideration of their educational outcomes as well as their health and wellbeing. Cyber-bullying (bullying via email, social networking sites etc) and bullying may include behaviours such as gossiping,

intimidation, shaming, social exclusion, and physical violence. [http://www.humanrights.gov.au/about/media/news/2011/120\\_11.html](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/about/media/news/2011/120_11.html)

## Reconciliation Australia

Reconciliation Australia (RA) is the peak organisation promoting reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and the broader Australian community. RA facilitates the creation of Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) that are designed to turn good intentions into real actions. Many schools across Australia have now developed their own RAPs, using a holistic approach to developing strong and respectful relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous staff, students, parents and carers.

<http://www.reconciliation.org.au/>

## Share with us!



We would love to hear your feedback on how helpful you have found this resource – feedback and questions are welcome at [schools@nsdc.org.au](mailto:schools@nsdc.org.au)

If you have a resource to recommend, why not share it with us by emailing [schools@nsdc.org.au](mailto:schools@nsdc.org.au)?

The NSDC can now promote upcoming school events for National Sorry Day and the Apology Anniversary, so why not get in touch and let us know your plans?

Be an inspiration to other schools and learn from other schools' experiences! Why not get in touch with a school that you read about on the NSDC website, in order to find out about their experiences of running an event for National Sorry Day or the Apology Anniversary – it's great when teachers get to share experiences and ideas as well as warnings of risks, challenges faced, or achievements they are proud of!

You can also share your photos and stories with other schools and with the National Sorry Day Committee by emailing [schools@nsdc.org.au](mailto:schools@nsdc.org.au)

You will need to obtain permission from the people in the photos before you email these through to the NSDC – also, please contact us on [schools@nsdc.org.au](mailto:schools@nsdc.org.au) if you need a release form in order to confirm that permission has been granted.

## 12. Appendix A: Suggested Resources and Links



Now that we are coming to the end of this resource it is important that you know where to go next to access other resources - including reports, books, music, and DVDs - that will help to supplement the information and recommendations that we have provided so far.

**The National Digital Learning Resources Network** is a highly recommended source of more than 12,000 digital curriculum resources that are free for use in all Australian schools. It is managed by Education Services Australia on behalf of the Standing Council for School Education and Early Childhood. Any content entering the National Collection of Digital Curriculum Resources administered by the National Digital Learning Resources Network is available to every Australian school.

The resources are aligned to state and territory curriculums and are progressively being aligned to the Australian Curriculum as it develops. The resources are made available to teachers through state and territory portals or **Scoutle** an online digital repository available to schools in each Australian State and Territory.

Education Services Australia has also brought together a number of resources that are part of the national pool of digital resources designed to support the Australian Curriculum. Many of these resources contain educational value statements and provide additional information for teachers. These resources are available to all educational institutions across Australia.

We also recommend that you visit your school or local library to access a copy of the *Bringing them home* Report, a very moving document in itself. It includes an excellent historical overview, series of personal testimonies, and a list of the 54 recommendations. Otherwise, the Report can be downloaded and read **online**.

The list below contains links to resources that can be used in classroom activities or during school events, and can be used to support some of the activities and events we recommend earlier in this resource. Wherever possible, we have provided direct website links for immediate access.

From time to time we update our website with new resources that we feel will be useful to teachers and schools when educating students about the Stolen Generations – simply visit our **website** for more details!

### 1. Teaching Resources on the Stolen Generations

- Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC). ***Bringing them home (Resource Kit)***. AHRC: Sydney, 2010. Available for download at [http://www.humanrights.gov.au/education/bringing\\_them\\_home/index.html](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/education/bringing_them_home/index.html)  
A detailed resource as part of the Commission's RightsEd – Human Rights Education Resources for Teachers series on the *Bringing them home* Report and the history of the Stolen Generations, with timelines and student activity sheets that are targeted at late Primary and Secondary students.
- Link-Up Queensland Aboriginal Corporation and Swinburne University of Technology, authored by Associate Professor Norman Sheehan. ***Stolen Generations Education: Aboriginal Cultural Strengths and Social and Emotional Wellbeing***, 2012. This resource is now available for purchase for \$25 (plus postage). Simply call Link-Up Queensland on (07) 3034 8444 or to order a copy download an order form at [www.link-upqld.org.au/education](http://www.link-upqld.org.au/education).  
This resource can be used by counsellors, teachers and community members to gain a better understanding of the history of Aboriginal child removals. While focussing on Queensland, it provides great insight into the effects this history has had on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities.
- Nunkuwarrin Yunti. ***Stolen Generations Primary School Resource Kit***, 2010-11. Available by contacting Nunkuwarrin Yunti by email at [nunku@nunku.org.au](mailto:nunku@nunku.org.au).  
A comprehensive and colourful resource focussed on the history of the Stolen Generations in South Australia, designed for years 5-7.
- Reconciliation South Australia Incorporated and Department of Education and Children's Services, Catholic Education: Adelaide. ***South Australian Education Pack*** [Resource Kit], 2008. Available to download from the Reconciliation South Australia **website**. (accessed May 2013).  
A resource designed for Early Years (Kindergarten - Year 2), Primary Years (Years 3 - 5) and Middle

years (Years 6 - 10) with links to the South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability Framework.

## 2. Personal Stories and Accounts from the Stolen Generations

- Australian Human Rights Commission. *Us Taken-Away Kids 'Commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Bringing them home Report'* (2007). Copies can be downloaded from the Australian Human Rights Commission [website](#).

This report includes a wide range of primary source material which can be used for inspiration and ideas by teachers. This source material includes a detailed timeline, extracts from the life stories of Stolen Generations survivors, poetry, art and examples of letters written by school students addressed to the Stolen Generations.

- Australian Human Rights Commission. *Bringing them home Report* (of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families), 1997. The report can be downloaded from the Australian Human Rights Commission's [website](#), while some of the personal stories of Stolen Generations survivors can be found and read [here](#).

The Inquiry took evidence from Stolen Generations survivors about their experiences – a number of these personal accounts are reproduced throughout the *Bringing them home Report*.

- National Library of Australia. *Listen to the Bringing Them Home oral history interviews webpage*, 1999 - 2002.

Filmed interviews with Stolen Generations survivors recorded by the National Library of Australia.

- Stolen Generations' Testimonies Foundation. *Stolen Generations Testimonies Project webpage*, 2012.

Filmed testimonies of the Stolen Generations can be viewed and listened to at the Stolen Generations Testimonies website, which was launched on National Sorry Day 2012.

## 3. Documentary/Film/DVD

- The Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples, at the Australian Parliament in Canberra, 13 February 2008. Part 1, Part 2, and Part 3 delivered by former Prime Minister the Hon Kevin Rudd can be viewed [online](#).
- Australian Screen. *Beyond Sorry*, 2003. Clips from this documentary, as well as information on where to source the film, can be viewed [here](#). This documentary explores the stories and consequences of the removal of children.
- Australian Screen. *Lousy Little Sixpence*, 1983. This documentary can be viewed on the Australian Screen [website](#), and is also available from libraries and resource centres. Lousy Little Sixpence provides archival footage and great detail concerning the removal of Aboriginal children from their families, as well as the historical context in which it took place.
- Australian Screen. *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, 2002. Three clips from the film can be viewed [here](#) on the Australian Screen website, whilst a copy of the full film can be purchased from the National Film and Sound Archive – see [here](#) for further details. This feature film depicts the journey of three young girls who escape from the mission they had been taken to, having been forcibly removed from their mother and family, as they make their own way home.
- Australian Screen. *Stolen Generations*, 2000. Three short clips lasting around three minutes each present and explore key issues in the context of the Stolen Generations. A number of other film clips can be viewed on the Australian Screen [website](#).
- Australian Human Rights Commission. *Bringing them home*, 1997. This DVD was produced by the Australian Human Rights Commission as an educational tool to help schools and communities learn about the Stolen Generations and the significance of the *Bringing them home Report*. It can be ordered [here](#), along with an activity sheet. This resource is of particular benefit to secondary students.
- Connecting Home. *Among Us*, 2012. This is a 30 minute documentary produced by the Victorian organisation Connecting Home about the Stolen Generations in Ballarat. This DVD can be ordered from Connecting Home by ringing 03 9679 0777 or by emailing [administration@connectinghome.org.au](mailto:administration@connectinghome.org.au)
- First Australians - TV Series. Episode 5, *Unhealthy Government Experiment*, 2009. This episode of the First Australians TV series is available to watch on the SBS [website](#). The episode examines the history of the



Stolen Generations and government policies affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

- **My Place**, Episode 1. 2008. This episode of the My Place TV series can be watched online [here](#). The **My Place** TV series explores events and people significant to Australia's history. In Episode 1, the Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples is featured. There are also online teaching activities provided with relevance to both the History and English curricula within the Australian Curriculum.
- Nomad Two Worlds Project. **Apology (It's time)**, 2008. Available to view [online](#).

This video clip was produced by the Nomad Two Worlds Project, editing the Apology with music and images in order to help bring the speech alive and to create a resource of use to schools and communities.

#### 4. Music and spoken word

- **'Brown Skin Baby (They took me away)'** by Bob Randall <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3ytJjioxKzI>
- **'Took the Children Away'** and **'Munjana'**, Archie Roach – from the album **Charcoal Lane** distributed through Mushroom Records and available on [iTunes](#).
- **'Sorry Song'** by Kerry Fletcher. Music and lyrics can be downloaded from the [Sorry Song website](#).

#### 5. Books and plays

The first books in this list may be more appropriate for early and middle **Primary years**, while those that follow are more suitable for later **Primary years and early Secondary years**.

- **'Bush Games and Knucklebones'** by Doris Kartinyeri (Magabala Books, published in 2003). Illustrations by Kunyi June-Anne McInerney.
- **'Took the children away'**, Archie Roach (a One Day Hill book, published in 2010). Illustrations by Ruby Hunter, with paintings by Peter Hudson.
- **'Down the hole'** by Edna Tantjingu Williams, Eileen Wani Wingfield and Kunyi June-Anne McInerney (IAD Press, published in 2000). Illustrations by Kunyi June-Anne McInerney.
- **'The Burnt Stick'** by Anthony Hill (Viking, Ringwood, published in 1994). Illustrations by Mark Sofilas.
- **'Audrey's Big Secret'** by Christine Harris (Little Hare Books, Surry Hills, published in 2009). Illustrations by Ann James. Available from [www.magabala.com](#)

- **'Stolen Girl'** by Trina Saffioti (Magabala Books, Broome, published in 2011). Illustrations by Norma MacDonald. Available from [www.magabala.com](#)
- **'Tell Me Why'** by Robyn Templeton and Sarah Jackson (Magabala Books, Broome, published in 2004). A story of a little girl who asked her grandmother a very important question when she was seven, trying to understand who she was and how she fitted into her extended family. Available from [www.magabala.com](#)
- **'Pila Wuk: When I was Young'** by Janeen Brian (a Magic Bean book published by Era Publications, 1996). Also available in a Big Book.
- **'My Story: Who am I? The Diary of Mary Talence, Sydney 1937'**, by Anita Heiss (Scholastic, published in 2010). This fictional diary of a 10-year-old Aboriginal girl in 1937 introduces primary school-aged readers to the experiences of Australia's Stolen Generations.



**Always consider the age appropriateness of resources before you use them to teach your students.**

"Acknowledging and recognising all aspects of our shared histories will empower us to take the right steps on the journey of healing."

Lynn Price

EALD Teacher and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Contact Officer



# 13. Appendix B: Extended Stolen Generations and Reconciliation Timeline



## 1800s -1970s

During this time many thousands of Aboriginal (and some Torres Strait Islander) children were forcibly removed from their families and communities across Australia.

## 1869

The *Aborigines Protection Act* (Vic) establishes an Aborigines Protection Board in Victoria to manage the interests of Aborigines. The Governor can order the removal of any child from their family to a reformatory or industrial school.

## 1905

The *Aborigines Act* (WA) is passed. Under this law, the Chief Protector is made the legal guardian of every Aboriginal and 'half-caste' child under 16 years old. In the following years, other states and territories enact similar laws.

## 1915

The *Aborigines Protection Amending Act* (NSW) gives power to the Aboriginal Protection Board to separate Aboriginal children from their families without having to establish in court that they were neglected.

## 1925

The Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association calls for an end to the forcible removal of Aboriginal children from their families.

## 1937

The first Commonwealth/State conference on 'native welfare' adopts assimilation as the national policy: 'The destiny of the natives of aboriginal origin, but not of the full blood, lies in ultimate absorption ... with a view to their taking their place in the white community on an equal footing with the whites.'

## 1940

The NSW Aborigines Protection Board loses its power to remove Aboriginal children. The Board is renamed the Aborigines Welfare Board and is finally abolished in 1969. A history of Aboriginal child welfare in NSW: <http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lrc.nsf/pages/RR7CHP2>

## 1948

*Universal Declaration of Human Rights* is adopted by the newly-formed United Nations, and supported by

Australia. The Declaration: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

## 1951

At the third Commonwealth/State Conference on 'native welfare', assimilation is affirmed as the aim of 'native welfare' measures.

## 1967

A national referendum is held questioning whether two references in the Constitution, which discriminate against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, should be removed. The amendments are endorsed, becoming law on 10 August 1967.

## 1969

By 1969, all states had repealed the legislation allowing for the removal of Aboriginal children under the policy of 'protection'. In the following years, Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agencies ('AICCAs') are set up to contest removal applications and provide alternatives to the removal of Indigenous children from their families.

## 1980

Link-Up (NSW) Aboriginal Corporation is established. It is followed by Link-Up (Brisbane) in 1984, Link-Up (Darwin) in 1989, Link-Up (Tas) in 1991, Link-Up (Vic) in 1992, Link-Up (SA) in 1999, Link-Up (Alice Springs) in 2000 and Link-Up (WA – seven sites) in 2001. Link-Up provides family tracing, reunion and support for forcibly removed children and their families. List of current Link-Up organisations: <http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/fhu/linkup.html>

## 1981

Secretariat of the National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care established (SNAICC). SNAICC represents the interests on a national level of Australia's 100 or so Indigenous community-controlled children's services. Secretariat of the National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care established (SNAICC): <http://www.snaicc.asn.au/>

## 1983

The Aboriginal Child Placement Principle, developed principally due to the efforts of Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agencies ('AICCAs') during the 1970s, is incorporated in NT welfare legislation in an attempt to ensure that Indigenous children are placed with Indigenous families when adoption or fostering is necessary. This is followed in NSW (1987), Victoria



(1989), South Australia (1993), Queensland and the ACT (1999), Tasmania (2000) and Western Australia (2006). *Bringing them home* Report – Aboriginal Child Placement Principle: State and Territory Review: [http://www.humanrights.gov.au/social\\_justice/bth\\_report/report/ch21.html#c](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/social_justice/bth_report/report/ch21.html#c)

#### 1991

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody presents its report to the Commonwealth Government. It finds that of the 99 deaths it investigated, 43 were of people who were separated from their families as children. AustLII website – Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody: <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/IndigLRes/rciadic/>

#### 1992

Prime Minister Paul Keating's Redfern Address launches the 1993 International Year of the World's Indigenous People, in which he states: 'It begins, I think, with that act of recognition... We took the children from their mothers... We failed to ask – how would I feel if this were done to me?'

#### 1994

The Going Home Conference in Darwin brings together over 600 Aboriginal people removed as children to discuss common goals of access to archives, compensation, rights to land and social justice.

#### 1995

The *National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families* is established by the Commonwealth Government in response to efforts made by key Indigenous agencies and communities. Inquiry Terms of Reference: <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/AILR/1996/6.html>

#### 1997

The Australian Human Rights Commission presents *Bringing them home*, its report on the findings of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families to the Commonwealth Government. The parliaments and governments of the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia all issue statements recognising and publicly apologising to the Stolen Generations. For the specific details of the apologies issued in various state jurisdictions, see: [http://www.humanrights.gov.au/social\\_justice/bth\\_report/apologies\\_states.html](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/social_justice/bth_report/apologies_states.html)

#### 1998

Federal Parliament passes a motion of 'deep and sincere regret over the removal of Aboriginal children from their parents.'

#### 2000

Australia appears before the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The Committee criticises the Commonwealth Government's inadequate response to recommendations from the *Bringing them home* Report.

Also, the People's Walk for Reconciliation on 28 May occurs in state and territory capitals throughout Australia and in NSW more than 300,000 people participate and walk together across the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

#### 2004

The Commonwealth Government establishes a memorial to the Stolen Generations at Reconciliation Place in Canberra. For a description of the text that accompanies the artwork see: [http://www.nationalcapital.gov.au/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=214:reconciliation-place&catid=57:ql-menu-visiting&Itemid=203461](http://www.nationalcapital.gov.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=214:reconciliation-place&catid=57:ql-menu-visiting&Itemid=203461)

'Sorry Books' recording the thoughts of Australians on the unfolding history of the Stolen Generations are inscribed on the Australian Memory of the World Register, part of UNESCO's program to protect and promote documentary material with significant historical value.

#### 2005

The National Sorry Day Committee announces that in 2005, Sorry Day will be a 'National Day of Healing for All Australians' in an attempt to better engage the non-Indigenous Australian community with the plight of the Stolen Generations.

#### 2006

The first Stolen Generations compensation scheme in Australia is set up in Tasmania by the Stolen Generations of *Aboriginal Children Act 2006* (Tas). For the full text of the legislation see: <http://www.thelaw.tas.gov.au>

Redress schemes to provide ex gratia payments to people who suffered abuse in State Care also emerged in Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania. Under these schemes some Stolen Generations members received payments for the abuse they endured.

#### 2007

The tenth anniversary of the *Bringing them home* Report is recognised around Australia with a number of different events, as well as a publication by the Commission, *Us Taken-Away Kids*. For details of the anniversary see [http://www.humanrights.gov.au/social\\_justice/bth\\_report/index.html](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/social_justice/bth_report/index.html)

On 1 August Mr Bruce Trevorrow became the first Stolen Generations survivor to successfully sue the state for compensation as a result of his removal from his family as a baby. Mr Trevorrow was awarded and paid compensation of \$775,000, including interest.

## 2008

On 13 February Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, on behalf of the Australian Parliament, makes a historic national Apology to the Stolen Generations. The Apology acknowledges the past mistreatment of Indigenous peoples and recognises the grief, suffering and loss inflicted on the Stolen Generations. The Apology meets part of the *Bringing them home* Report's recommendation for reparations.

The Stolen Generation Compensation Bill 2008 (Bill) is introduced into the Senate by Senator Andrew Bartlett. The Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs recommends that the Bill not be passed, but that the implementation of the *Bringing them home* Report recommendations be monitored and that the Government establish a National Indigenous Healing Fund.

In January, Tasmania becomes the first state to offer financial compensation to Stolen Generations survivors.

## 2009

In May, the Australian Parliament recognises National Sorry Day as a National Day of Remembrance.

On 3 April the Australian Government formally endorses the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Declaration recognises the legitimate entitlement of Indigenous peoples to all human rights based on principles of equality and non-discrimination. Article 8 requires governments to prevent and provide remedies for forced assimilation, forced population transfers and dispossession from lands.

The Australian Government commits \$26.6 million for the establishment of a Healing Foundation to address trauma and healing in the wider indigenous community, with a focus on the Stolen Generations. The Foundation is incorporated on 30 October 2009 and the inaugural Board holds its first meeting in December 2009.

On 22 November, the Australian Government commits to the establishment of a new national representative body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, to be known as the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples. The Government commits \$29.2 million for the establishment and initial operation of the body.

## 2010

The Stolen Generations Working Partnership is launched on National Sorry Day by Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs the Hon Jenny Macklin. The Partnership brings Commonwealth Government departments, Link-Up agencies, and Stolen Generations national organisations together to advance the interests of the Stolen Generations through policy and program development.

The NSDC has been granted permission to publish this edited extract of the Australian Human Rights Commission's own full and comprehensive timeline, that reflects the history of the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, which is available at [http://www.humanrights.gov.au/education/bth/timeline/timeline\\_text.html](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/education/bth/timeline/timeline_text.html)

**"I, as an Aboriginal voice in this chamber, say thank you for the apology delivered in the federal parliament and I thank the Hon Kevin Rudd for honouring his commitment to the Stolen Generations. I hope that all governments continue to embrace new solutions to enduring problems where old approaches have failed, where enduring approaches need to change and where the future we all influence is based on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility."**

**The Hon Ken Wyatt MP**  
Federal Member for Hasluck

## 14. Appendix C: Glossary



- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flags:** The Aboriginal Flag was designed by Harold Thomas, a Luritja man from Central Australia. It was created as a symbol of unity and national identity for Aboriginal people during the land rights movement of the early 1970s. The colours are Black (at the top – representing the Aboriginal people of Australia), Yellow (in the middle - representing the Sun, the giver of life and protector), and Red (at the bottom – representing the red earth, the red ochre and a spiritual relation to the land). The Torres Strait Islander Flag was created as a symbol of unity and identity for Torres Strait Islander peoples, designed by the late Bernard Namok from Thursday Island. The flag's colours are green at the top and bottom (representing the land); then black (representing the people); then blue (representing the sea); then white (representing peace). The dhari (headdress) represents Torres Strait Islander people, whilst the five pointed star represents the five major Island groups. The star also represents navigation, as a symbol of the seafaring culture of the Torres Strait.
- **Aboriginal people:** term to describe the First Nations People of mainland Australia and Tasmania.
- **Acknowledgement of Country:** When holding an event, it is respectful to publicly acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land that you are meeting on, and helps to show respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as Australia's First Peoples. An Acknowledgement of Country can be performed by anyone.
- **ANZAC Day:** a day that marks the loss suffered by Australian and New Zealand forces at the Gallipoli campaign in World War I.
- **Apology Anniversary, 13 February:** a day to celebrate and reflect on the Australian Parliament's *Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples*, and in particular to the Stolen Generations.
- **Australian Curriculum:** a national curriculum for all Australian schools, developed and managed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).
- **Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC):** The Australian Human Rights Commission is an independent statutory organisation established in 1986 by an act of the Federal Parliament. It was previously known as the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC).
- **Bringing them home Report:** the Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families, which was tabled in the Australia Parliament on 26 May 1997.
- **Broader Australian community:** Australians who do not identify as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.
- **Cultural and social knowledge and tradition:** that knowledge and behavior that is the foundation and structure of a society or group of people, including language, rules, law, ceremony and lore.
- **First Nations Peoples:** this term describes the peoples of the many distinct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations who have lived in Australia for many thousands of years. These nations had their own distinct languages, cultures, and traditions.
- **Flag raising ceremony:** a ceremony where the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander flags are raised alongside the Australian flag out of respect to the different peoples of Australia.
- **Forcible removal policies:** Federal, State and Territory government laws and acts that were in effect from the late 1800s to the 1970s that allowed for the forced separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families and communities for the purpose of assimilation.
- **Indigenous peoples:** term to describe the first inhabitants of a country and their descendants.
- **Mabo:** The late Eddie Koiki Mabo, from Murray Island in the Torres Strait. On 3 June 1992, six months after Eddie Mabo's tragic death, the High Court of Australia upheld his claim (in *Mabo vs Queensland*) that Murray Islanders held native title to land in the Torres Strait. This was a landmark judgement, and has since led to a number of native title claims across Australia – in unalienated Crown Lands, national parks and reserves – in recognition of the fact that Australia was never terra nullius, or empty land.
- **NAIDOC Week:** National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee – a week of events and activities that celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait



Islander cultures and achievements. Usually held from the first Sunday until the second Sunday July.

- **National Reconciliation Week:** a week that is celebrated across Australia each year between 27 May and 3 June. The dates commemorate two significant milestones for the reconciliation process - the anniversaries of the successful 1967 referendum and the High Court Mabo decision. The week is a time for all Australians to learn about our shared histories, cultures and achievements and to explore how we can support the national reconciliation effort.
- **National Sorry Day Committee:** a not-for-profit organisation that works for recognition, justice and healing for the Stolen Generations, their families and communities.
- **National Sorry Day, 26 May:** a day of remembrance and commemoration of the Stolen Generations.
- **NSDC's Schools Program:** An NSDC initiative that aims to provide support to schools, specifically teachers, when educating students about the history of the Stolen Generations and when planning and implementing events to remember National Sorry Day and the Apology Anniversary.
- **Pledge Book:** a Pledge Book provides Australians with an opportunity to document their comments, promises and pledges of support for the rights of the Stolen Generations, their families and communities.
- **Reconciliation:** the process of building positive and strong relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People and other Australians.
- **Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP):** RAPs provide schools, businesses, government agencies and other organisations with an opportunity to make a practical commitment to reconciliation, by identifying tangible steps that they can take in their own places of work or education to create meaningful relationships and sustainable opportunities for Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.
- **Smoking ceremony:** a smoking ceremony cleanses an area and harmonises the energy of those present. The ceremony involves the burning of eucalyptus and other medicinal leaves from the Australian bush.
- **Sorry Business:** a term that describes a time of mourning when an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community member passes away.
- **Stolen Generations:** The Stolen Generations are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults who, as children, were forcibly removed from their families, communities and culture, under State, Territory or Federal laws between the 1800s to the 1970s.
- **Timpilypa:** Traditional Aboriginal music sticks used by both men and women as musical accompaniment during ceremonies. They are crafted mainly by women and are made from hard wood and are highly resonant.
- **Torres Strait Islander people:** the inhabitants of the 274 small islands in the Torres Strait and the two northern peninsula communities in Far North Queensland.
- **Traditional Knowledge:** This can be defined as an understanding of the important role of plants and animals, the way that ecosystems function, and the methods and techniques of using this knowledge to provide food, medicine, and basic commodities in order to sustain oneself. This knowledge forms an important part of cultural identity.
- **Welcome to Country:** a ceremony performed by a local traditional custodian or Elder of the land on which the ceremony is performed. The purpose of a Welcome to Country ceremony is to welcome all present and to offer a safe visit and safe travel during their stay.
- **Wellbeing:** the physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual wellness of an individual. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people this is inherently connected to the wellbeing of their family, community and country.
- **Wordle:** as explained on the [www.wordle.net](http://www.wordle.net) website – 'a toy for generating 'word clouds' from text that you provide. The clouds give greater prominence to words that appear more frequently in the source text. You can tweak your clouds with different fonts, layouts, and colour schemes.'
- **1967 referendum (27 May):** the referendum that allowed for the federal government to make laws for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and to recognise the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to be included in counts of the Australian population.



## 15. Closing Statement from the Executive of the NSDC

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Improving awareness of the history of the Stolen Generations, of the impacts of the forcible removal policies on their families and communities and indeed on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia, remains an absolutely vital area of work carried out by the National Sorry Day Committee.

Children and young people across this great country are our future and their education is an investment in the consciousness, health and wellbeing of this diverse nation.

The significance of the role that teachers and educators play in achieving a generation of informed and aware young people cannot be overstated. To be faced with the opportunity that the NSDC has, to assist and support Australia's teaching community in educating students about the Stolen Generations, is truly a gift.

It is our sincerest hope that this educational resource, which outlines a series of recommendations for school-wide events and classroom activities, will ease the task at hand that teachers across the country face.

With an Australian Curriculum that finally pays due respect to the true history of the Stolen Generations, teachers, families and communities can now move ahead together, helping our children to understand a difficult shared past, but also the opportunities that the future provides to ensure that never again will Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children be forcibly removed from their families, communities and cultures.





# Sorry

a little word that we teach  
children every day







This publication is available to all registrants of the Schools Program,  
an initiative of the National Sorry Day Committee.

Registration is free and all Australian schools are encouraged to join.  
Please contact us for more information.

[www.nsd.org.au](http://www.nsd.org.au)



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