

ISABEL REID



Isabel Reid is a Wiradjuri woman from Dubbo, in central west NSW. She was seven years old when she was stolen from her parents.

“We said goodbye to mum and dad one morning and went to school. Mum had to go to work. Dad had already gone to work”. Isabel, her five year old sister Betty and ten year old brother Jack were picked up by a stranger while walking home from school.

“A truck pulled up beside us when we were about half way home. A gentleman got out and said that he would give us a ride home. As children always do, we got into the truck. But we were not taken home; we were taken to the police station in Dubbo and we were put in the jail cells for the night,” she said.

The next morning she and Betty were put on a train and sent to the Cootamundra Domestic Training Home for Aboriginal Girls. There they were trained to become domestic servants. At 15yo they were hired out as domestic servants to wealthy non-Aboriginal families and businesses, until

they turned 18. Their wages were paid to the government.

Isabel’s brother was sent to the Kinchela Aboriginal Boys Training Home. She hasn’t seen him since. For many years she placed an ad every week which said:

“Jack, if you’re out there, even if you don’t want to come home, I know the trauma you went through, because I went through it too, brother, and as long as you’re happy then I’m happy.”

Isabel said, “Maybe he had a family. Maybe he died young; I do not know. It is the not knowing that is really heartbreaking.”

Survivors refer to themselves as 'Coota Girls'. In 2013, they set up the Coota Girls Corporation and have fought to have the Bringing Them Home recommendations implemented. Their efforts led to last year’s \$74 million reparation package offered by the NSW government. Isabel is Chair of the Coota Girls Corporation and lives in Wagga Wagga in the south west of NSW.

Now aged 84, Isabel survives her sister Betty who passed away in 1977.

“It is our time now to make things better. Once we had no say but now we have.”
Isabel Reid



BringingThemHome
HEAL OUR PAST • BUILD OUR FUTURE

#BTH20 1997-2017

a Healing Foundation project