



HealingFoundation

Media release

Thursday 12 February 2026

18th Anniversary of the National Apology: Survivors call for urgent action, not words

‘We Survived the Past. Don’t Fail Our Future.’

Eighteen years after the National Apology, Stolen Generations survivors are still waiting for the meaningful change they were promised.

The Apology was a moment of truth-telling and recognition, but it was never meant to stand alone. It was a commitment to act. Yet almost three decades since *Bringing them home*, progress remains slow and uneven. Survivors are ageing, many now aged between 70s to 90s.

Without immediate action, trauma-informed and affordable aged care, equitable redress, access to records, sustained funding for survivor-led organisations, and national accountability, survivors risk being failed once again.

Stolen Generations survivor Uncle David Wragge, Wakka Wakka, said the country is running out of time to uphold the commitments made to them. The evidence is clear, the solutions are known, and the urgency could not be greater.

“Nearly thirty years after *Bringing them home*, only six per cent of the recommendations have been enacted. That’s a real shame on Australia,” he said.

“Aged care, records, redress, these are the key issues survivors are still fighting for. We’re running out of time.”

Uncle David, who sits on The Healing Foundation’s Stolen Generations Reference Group, was separated from his parents at nine years old and forcibly taken to Cherbourg’s Boys’ Dormitory, northwest of Brisbane.

He spent the next six years under strict control from mission managers and was subjected to severe punishments, suffering abuse, leaving impacting trauma that would last a lifetime.

Uncle David said truth telling was critically important to educate the next generations of Australians and heal intergenerational trauma.

“These things happened under governments’ control. They need to step up and make reparations to the people and families these policies harmed,” he said.

“We had no wealth growing up, but we had spirit... and that spirit was about caring for other human beings with dignity and respect. All Australians should have that spirit.”



“The trauma of being taken doesn’t stop with us. It gets handed down to our children.”

With the 30th anniversary of *Bringing them home* approaching in 2027, this moment demands leadership, accountability and action that delivers real change within survivors’ lifetimes. The path forward is clear.

Professor Steve Larkin, Chair of The Healing Foundation, said survivors and Stolen Generations organisations have been advocating for decades and delays were getting in the way of healing.

“Survivors are ageing. Too many have already passed away without ever seeing justice, and more will unless governments act now,” Professor Larkin said.

“The Apology was a commitment, not a closing chapter. Accountability is what turns that moment into real change for survivors in their lifetime.

“Survivors deserve dignity in their later years, justice in their lifetime, and confidence that the country has finally delivered on the commitments it made to them.”

Governments can honour the Apology not with more symbolism, but with tangible, practical commitments that allow survivors to age with dignity, access justice, reconnect with family and culture, and heal across generations. We know what must be done, now national leadership is needed to carry it forward.

The National Apology was a powerful moment of recognition, but action was never meant to be the end. Eighteen years on, survivors are still waiting.

Date: Friday 13 February 2026

Location: Nationally

Learn more about [The Healing Foundation](#).

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