

National Sorry Day

26
May



About National Sorry Day

National Sorry Day is held annually on 26 May to remember and acknowledge the Stolen Generations – the Aboriginal children forcibly removed from their families, communities, Country, language and culture under previous government policies.

It is a day to reflect on the continuing grief and trauma inflicted on stolen children and their families, the strength and resilience of survivors, and the outstanding needs of ageing survivors today.

The date marks the anniversary of the tabling of *Bringing them home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families* in the Australian Parliament in 1997. Commemorating Sorry Day was one of many significant recommendations of this report.

About the *Bringing them home* report

The landmark *Bringing them home* report uncovered the truth of Australia's Stolen Generations history and, for the first time, shared this history with the nation.

The report made 83 recommendations to address the ongoing impacts of the Stolen Generations policies and practices, and the resulting intergenerational trauma. These recommendations included a national apology, reparations, improved services and records access, and a process for monitoring implementation of these recommendations.

In 2024 The Healing Foundation commissioned research and undertook significant consultation with Stolen Generations survivors and their organisations to fully understand progress in implementing the *Bringing them home* recommendations, and to outline urgent and outstanding priorities for action.

Urgent priorities include:

- Improved access to records, both public and private collections.
- Culturally safe and appropriate aged care that doesn't re-traumatise people.
- Equitable redress for survivors in all states and territories.
- Investment in vital services on the ground, particularly for Stolen Generations organisations.

Our report 'Are you waiting for us to die?' found that only 6% of the *Bringing them home* report recommendations – made to support Stolen Generations survivors and their families 28 years ago – have been clearly implemented.

For more information and to contact us info@healingfoundation.org.au

Who are the Stolen Generations?

The Stolen Generations refers to the tens of thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were forcibly removed from their families and communities from the mid-1800s until the 1980s.

In every state and territory, Aboriginal children were systematically removed as part of deliberate assimilation policies aimed at erasing their identity. Children were forcibly removed to institutions or placed with non-Indigenous families – often without the consent of their parents. They were separated from their culture, family, Country, and identity, and many of them suffered abuse and neglect.

The trauma of forced removal left many survivors with multiple complex and overlapping needs. As a direct result of their forcible removal, survivors and their descendants face poorer health, mental health, social, and economic outcomes than other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Stolen Generation survivors represent a 'gap within the gap', yet they often lack access to appropriate services, including to address their needs as they age.

What can you do to support National Sorry Day?

Governments and policy makers

The Healing Foundation is calling on all Australian governments to work together:

- We call on all political parties, federal, state and territory governments, police, churches and other agencies and organisations to meet their responsibilities to the Stolen Generations by acting urgently to implement priority recommendations.

Education providers

National Sorry Day emphasises the significance of truth-telling in education. We encourage learning and education providers to:

- Engage in Sorry Day activities and events and promote a deeper understanding of and respect for Australia's history and the histories of Stolen Generations survivors.
- Continue this learning throughout the year by incorporating [The Healing Foundation's Stolen Generations Resource kit for Teachers and Students](#). The kit makes it easy for school communities to start the conversation and inform classroom discussions using fun and engaging learning resources.
- Explore our [Educator Guide](#) to help teachers gain confidence in educating their classes about First Nations history.

Individuals and organisations

There are many actions people can take to show their support for Stolen Generations survivors, including:

- Learn more and share knowledge. Understanding and sharing the truth of Australia's Stolen Generations history is critical to healing and truth-telling.
- Attend a local event. Many community organisations will hold local Sorry Day events, you can find info at healingfoundation.org.au.
- Consider your interactions with Stolen Generations survivors and actions you can take to ensure these are always trauma aware and healing informed.
- Visit our website to learn more about supporting ageing survivors. You'll find resources to share, our Sorry Day social media kit and more.
- Support Stolen Generations survivors through their healing journey by donating to [The Healing Foundation](#).

All reports and resources are available at our website
healingfoundation.org.au