

GPO Box 1307 Canberra ACT 2601

MEDIA RELEASE

Contact: Dr Ray Cleary (Chair)
0419 371 613
Kasy Chambers (Executive Director)
0401 494 380

13 February 2008

Anglicare Australia salutes Government's dignified apology to the Stolen Generation

Anglicare Australia unreservedly welcomes the Rudd/Federal Government's formal apology to the country's Stolen Generation as a necessary and long overdue stage in the process of national reconciliation.

'Symbolism *is* important,' said Executive Director Kasy Chambers. 'That is why we have a national flag, a national anthem and national cultural icons.

'And the ability to say "Sorry" — and mean it — is a sign of moral strength, both on the individual level and collectively.

'As with signing the Kyoto Protocol, the apology marks a significant change in public consciousness and responsibility. Today's declaration in Parliament is a unequivocal statement about historical injustices, the appalling consequences to which those injustices gave rise, and the commitment of generations now living to repair the damage of the past, face realistically the challenges of the present, and secure a decent life for all Australians in the future.

'There is *no* conflict between symbolic and practical reconciliation — any more than there is between taking an oath of office and carrying out one's duties.

THE VOICE FOR ANGLICAN CARE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN AUSTRALIA

'Like the Government, Anglicare Australia seeks to combine a moral vision with on-the-ground practical involvement in Indigenous issues and development — with the country's most disadvantaged people.'

LOCAL EXAMPLES

The original 'Bringing Them Home' report — which recommended a national apology — was delivered in 1997. Since then, every State and Territory leader from the Liberal and Labor parties has issued an apology.

Anglicare Australia was one of the signatories to the 1997 Statement of Apology and Commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, organised by ACOSS, which stressed 'our resolve to ensure that such a terrible infringement of human rights never occurs again in our country'.

It has taken over a decade for such resolve to extend to our highest parliament.

'It is saddening that at the federal level, this simple act of recognition has been made the subject of legalistic and semantic nit-picking — partisan tokenism at its worst,' said Ms Chambers.

'From now on, we can hope to address together the numerous issues of Indigenous advancement with an ethical dignity that, too often, has been thus far sorely lacking.'

ENDS

THE VOICE FOR ANGLICAN CARE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN AUSTRALIA

This statement represents the views of Anglicare Australia, as the national peak body of the Anglicare network. It may not necessarily represent the views of the Anglican Church of Australia or the views of an individual member of the Anglicare Australia network.