

From the Stolen Generations Alliance

POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR STOLEN GENERATIONS BUT FAR MORE SUPPORT NEEDED

An independent report criticising the Government's response to the *Bringing Them Home* report as "insufficiently documented, poorly co-ordinated and insufficiently targeted to meet the needs of the Stolen Generations" was long overdue, the Stolen Generations Alliance said today.

The report, *Evaluation of the Bringing Them Home and Indigenous Mental Health Programs*, by social research consultancy Urbis Keys Young, has been released. It comes in the run up to the 10th anniversary on May 26 of the tabling of the *Bringing Them Home Report*, which revealed the tragic impact of the removal policies on Indigenous Australians.

"The report's documentation of the severe consequences of removal in Australia on Indigenous people's social and emotional well-being is timely," said the Stolen Generations Alliance chair Brian Butler.

"It names consequences such as loss, trauma, grief, offending behaviour, adverse life outcomes, substance abuse, higher rates of mental health problems, suicide and violence, parenting problems and poorer physical health," he said. "It also tells of the outstanding work of Link-Up and the *Bringing Them Home* counsellors in helping survivors of these policies to find healing."

Since the release of the *Bringing Them Home* Report in 1997, counselling services have been established in many places to cater for the needs of those affected by the removal policies. And the Link-Up services – which bring together family members separated by the policies – have been expanded across the country.

The Urbis Keys Young evaluation focuses on the little-known work of those social and mental health workers who have devoted themselves to healing the Stolen Generations. It points to the "high rate of client satisfaction and positive outcomes" of their work, but says they have "inordinately heavy workloads".

"The average case load for a mental health worker in a mainstream service is 25," the report states. "The case loads of *Bringing Them Home* counsellors and Link-Up workers can exceed 80." And they are so hard-pressed coping with clients in their vicinity that, in large areas of the country, those who need help are unable to receive it.

"There is far too high a rate of burnout among *Bringing Them Home* counsellors and Link-Up workers," concluded Butler. "If the Federal and State Governments will give the support they need, we will see many desperate people find health and hope."

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