

MEDIA RELEASE

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Howard **repeats history - MORE STOLEN GENERATIONS.**

The National Sorry Day Committee presents its credentials as the long established premier National Advocate for the Stolen Generations.

We are making a national statement to the Australian people.

There is now a real danger of the creation by the Howard government of another Stolen Generation.

We are deeply concerned about the policy being articulated by the Prime Minister, and being implemented the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, for Federal Government 'emergency measures' relating to Aboriginal child safety within Aboriginal Communities in the Northern Territory.

It is with great sorrow that the National Sorry Day Committee **condemns** the Howard Government's cherry picking of recommendations of previous Royal Commissions and National and State Inquiries into Aboriginal Affairs concerning the state of Indigenous Health, Education, Child Safety and Family Support with a complete disregard for the Human Rights of Indigenous Australia in the pursuit of an inadequate response to a decade of Federal Government neglect in the Indigenous Affairs portfolio.

The National Sorry Day Committee **expresses its strong regret**, and with the greatest of reproach, that this blind disregard for the Human Rights of Indigenous Australia continues to be the shameful reality under the Howard Government's continuation of a destructive policy in Indigenous Affairs.

We call on the Prime Minister, and the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, to address the following facts:

- there are the 339 Recommendations from the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Report*, released in 1990.
- there are the 54 Recommendations from *Bringing Them Home Report*, released in 1997.
- now there are another 97 Recommendations from the **Little Children are Sacred Report**, released in June 2007. This makes a grand total of 490 recommendations.

It is agreed amongst commentators that most of the earlier 393 recommendations until June 2007 either have been absolutely ignored, or implemented in an ineffectual manner through inadequate funding, limited resources and insufficient service providers and staff.

The 54 Recommendations of the **Bringing Them Home Report**, released in 1997 have been stonewalled for the ten years in which John Howard has led this nation.

There is still no apology.

Were the Howard Government to have initiated responsible action based on these recommendations, including a national apology, then the issues facing the Stolen Generations and the consequential trans-generational issues which now so damagingly impact on all Aboriginal communities would have been addressed, and some definite positive change to the Human Rights and the living conditions of all Aboriginal people, and especially Aboriginal children, would have been brought about by now.

Instead Prime Minister Howard has refused any adequate response to the recommendations from the **Bringing Them Home Report** report, with the ongoing damage to human lives we see today.

The current realisation by the Federal Government of this National Emergency is a manifestation of the decade of inadequate Child Protection by the Federal Government in Indigenous communities.

However, and quite reprehensively, Prime Minister Howard is using this tragic reality to deflect public attention away from the fact that it has been his government that has consistently denied the affected Aboriginal children any adequate access to their basic human rights in: health, housing, education, personal security, safety and well being.

But more than that, and in the absence of a genuine national apology from him for his involvement in fostering these vicious circumstances afflicting Aboriginal people across Australia, the Prime Minister is proving himself patently to be insincere.

He knows that he has much to answer for his own neglect and indifference to Aboriginal people.

Both during his time in the Fraser Government as the Nation's Treasurer and now as the Nation's Prime Minister, John Howard has had the power and the financial capacity under the constitution to remove, alleviate and redress the deprivation and chronically deteriorated living conditions Aboriginal children, their families and communities have had to endure, especially under Liberal administration.

The **Little Children are Sacred Report** thoroughly examines the issue of Aboriginal child sexual abuse.

The report recognises the issue as one of urgent national significance, recommending that both the Australian and Northern Territory Governments establish an immediate collaborative partnership with a Memorandum of Understanding to specifically address the protection of Aboriginal children from sexual abuse.

Most significantly, the report asserts **it is critical that both governments commit to genuine consultation with Aboriginal people in designing initiatives for Aboriginal communities.**

Recommendations 4, 5, 40 a, b

4. That the government develop a Child Impact Analysis for all major policy and practice proposals across Government.

5. That the government develop a whole of- government approach in respect of child sexual abuse. Protocols should be developed as a matter of urgency to enhance information sharing between agencies and the development of a coordinated approach in which all agencies acknowledge a responsibility for child protection.. The approach might build on the work of the Strategic Management Group and Child Abuse Taskforce but needs to extend well beyond those initiatives.

40. That the Northern Territory Government work with the Australian Government in consultation with Aboriginal communities to:

a. develop a comprehensive long-term strategy to build a strong and equitable core service platform in Aboriginal communities, to address the underlying risk factors for child sexual abuse and to develop functional communities in which children are safe

b. through this strategy, address the delivery of core educational and Primary Health Care (PHC) services to Aboriginal people including home visitation and early years services (see Chapter on Health).

We call on the Prime Minister, and the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, to provide the Australian people with justifiable answers at a minimum to the following pressing questions that arise from the recommendations of the **Little Children are Sacred Report**:

- What consultations and plans have been made in regard to this newest policy for reform that will ensure that it is implemented with and not against the Indigenous population?
- What assistance and support if any is there in the areas of detoxification, rehabilitation, counselling, and education?
- What resources and services are there to support Indigenous people once these changes are made?
- How will people be assisted safely to come off their alcohol or substance addiction?
- Where are the rehabilitation services to be established and to what degree will they be effective?
- Where are the trauma counselling and support services for families to be instituted?

But there is another question that cannot be suppressed regarding the motives behind John Howard's sweeping policy and the significance of the timing to impose such a draconian plan on the run and without prior departmental analysis and comprehensive costings, which relates to the influence it will have on the polls and voting in the next federal election:

- Have the opinion polls scared John Howard to the point where he is scrambling to influence votes with the Race Card, at the expense of Australia's Aboriginal Community?

With one of the first Aboriginal communities targeted for the immediate introduction of Australia's armed forces in a support role with conscripted police enforcement from all around the country being Mutitjulu Community (a dry Community) at the base of Uluru, not only just Aboriginal people are seeing this as proof of the intention to use "Martial Law".

Mutitjulu Community is one of the many Aboriginal Communities that have been directly affected by Deaths in Custody, previous Government Removal Policies and continual trans-generational abuse and neglect through government policy and control.

There are three significant interrelated events that have occurred in the Northern Territory since June 15, 2007 and which are of substantial concern to the National Sorry Day Committee:

- 1) The public release on 15 June 2007 of the Northern Territory Government's report from its Board of Inquiry into Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse.
- 2) The winning by Mutitjulu Community of its Federal Court challenge to the appointment of a Perth-based administrator by the Federal Government. This means that the community's former governing committee will soon resume its role. In 2006 the Registrar had given only one day's notice, after the federal government said the community's funding would cease unless an administrator was appointed. The federal appeal court judges said that: *"There was no evidence of any particular threatened unlawful or imprudent transaction on the part of the (Mutitjulu) Corporation that needed to be urgently prevented"*.
- 3) The Howard Government's announcement of a new policy of intended measures against the Indigenous communities through out the Northern Territory claiming it to be *"in the best interest of the children"*.

Highly respected Mutitjulu Elder and Stolen Generations Survivor, Bob Randall, producer of the newly released film Kanyini, revealed to the National Sorry Day Committee that following the accusations presented on ABC TV's Lateline in July 2006 by a staffer in the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Mal Brough's, office that members of the Mutitjulu Community were sexually abusing and prostituting children, a full investigation by both local

and territory police found nothing to substantiate the accusations. There have been no arrests nor have any charges been brought against any of the 95 community members.

Bob Randall further identified that since the policy of self-determination came into practice in the Mutitjulu Community back in 1972, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs removed the staff that were then working there and have starved the community of the competent staff and resources that the community needed to operate effectively. Instead, the government left untrained people to take over.

Over the last decade the Howard Government has further withdrawn and reduced funding and resources, with a total neglect of the basic needs of the Community, which was then forced into an unnecessarily bureaucratic form of over-administration and is now being bullied into signing 99 year lease agreements.

The plight of Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory expresses the plight of all Indigenous Australians who have been crying out for initiatives and actions that the Howard Government has and continues to ignore.

The 1967 Referendum may have recognised Aboriginal people as Citizens of Australia to be counted in the Census, but in reality the present Government's attitude and intent is to continue to enact the "white" culturally dominated Liberal view of administration in disguise for the same old racist implementation of the life threatening and soul destroying manipulation of Indigenous Australian's basic human needs that had characterised the federal view of the constitution up to 1967.

This current policy to undertake the drastic measures imposed by the Prime Minister, comes from the same racist and draconian political manoeuvres of past governments stretching back beyond federation that encompass the forceful displacement of Indigenous people using the Policies of Forced Removal of Aboriginal Children as they were progressively implemented under the equally inhumane and discredited Policies of Martial Law, Protection, Assimilation, Integration and now Absorption.

All of these policies instigated and implemented National Acts of Genocide, and it appears that the Howard Government's intent towards White Supremacy is relentless.

The National Sorry Day Committee **is horrified** that the Prime Minister is apparently intent on unashamedly and deliberately using Aboriginal children in the same way that past governments, through the Removal Policies that created the Stolen Generations, used Aboriginal children to control the lives, lands and rights of Indigenous Australia.

The National Sorry Day Committee calls upon each right thinking and fair-minded Australian with a sense of just decency to assume the responsibility to prevent such an outrage from happening again.

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