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MEDIA RELEASE

Rudd Government abandons Labor platform over Stolen Generations

The Rudd Government's decision to rule out compensation for members of the Stolen Generations flies in the face of the policy platform it took to the recent federal election.

The platform committed a Labor Government to "provide a comprehensive response to the *Bringing them home* report."

Recommendations three, four and fourteen through to twenty of the *Bringing them home* report all deal with the question of monetary compensation for members of the Stolen Generations.

So central was the issue of financial compensation to *Bringing them home*, that its authors considered on page 13 that: "Our principal conclusion is that an appropriate and adequate response to the history and effects of forcible removals requires reparations which include, as one form of reparations, monetary compensation for defined victims."

ANTaR National Director, Gary Highland said it was impossible to provide a comprehensive response to *Bringing them home* without carefully considering the issue of financial compensation.

"The question of financial compensation was crucial to *Bringing them home*. Nine of the 54 recommendations dealt with this issue, it was one of the four terms of reference referred to the Inquiry by former Labor Attorney General, Michael Lavarch, and the report was unambiguous in its view that financial compensation should be a necessary element of the government response."

"The Government's recent knee jerk comments in relation to this issue are far from the comprehensive response it promised in Opposition," Mr Highland said.

Mr Highland said it was not credible for the Government to use its commitment to the Close the Gap deadlines as an excuse not to compensate members of the Stolen Generations.

"ANTaR has repeatedly congratulated the Rudd Government for its commitment to closing the gaps in Aboriginal health, education and economic development. But this positive commitment should not absolve the Government of responsibility in other areas of Indigenous Affairs policy," he said.

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“Close the Gap is all about creating a better future for Indigenous people. Bringing them home is about making right the injustices of the past. Aboriginal people shouldn’t have to trade one of these things off against the other. Both should be essential elements of Indigenous policy.”

Mr Highland said the absence of a compensation fund would force many Stolen Generations members to seek restitution through the courts, prolonging the uncertainty and suffering of elderly and vulnerable Aboriginal people.

“The Rudd Government took a very sound Indigenous Affairs platform and set of policies to the last election that it now has a mandate to implement. It should hold its nerve and not abandon them under pressure now that it is in government,” Mr Highland said.

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