

Submission to the Senate Inquiry into Stolen Wages

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I support the right of Aboriginal people whose wages were misappropriated by State government departments and agents over the last century or more to be paid their rightful moneys, whether these persons are still living or not.

I am appalled that governments have been able to do this without any accountability, not only to the individuals concerned, but to their constituents generally.

As I am really only au fait with the situation in Queensland, I am disgusted with the offer the Queensland Government has made to our indigenous people and with the conditions attached to that offer.

I can only imagine that the reason behind this is that the records are in such poor condition that the process of sorting out who is entitled to be paid and how much, and where the money has gone, would be so time consuming and expensive that the Government is trying to avoid it.

However, to offer people the paltry sums of \$4000 and \$2000 compensation, which does not even pay for a decent funeral (I know because I've just buried my sister-in-law), is so insulting that I cannot believe the Premier even had the gall to offer it, let alone be accepted by the representatives of these people.

The right and proper thing to do is to establish each individual claimant's, or their descendant's, eligibility and work out a sum that would approximate the sum of their unpaid wages, with interest and inflation, and pay it. Compensation for hardship and humiliation should also be paid. I do not agree with the Premier or former Minister, John Mickel, that this is taxpayers' money. This is money that is owed by taxpayers for wages (discounted to 45% of whites' wages) which should have been paid in the past. That it wasn't, is not the fault of Aboriginal workers.