

Submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee
Inquiry into Stolen Wages

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We would like the matter of stolen wages to be cleared up as accurately and sensitively as possible. We think the current offer is inadequate and the process has been unsatisfactory. We urge the Government to make a more generous offer, based on a better assessment of the debts owing to people.

Secondly, regardless of the ability and/or desire of current Governments to pay back stolen wages it is important that people (or if necessary their concerned relatives) are given proper access to all existing records and are able to get a report on what their records contain. The individuals affected have the right to know about their affairs, and the rest of Australia needs to have an accurate picture of the long-term injustices suffered by Aboriginal workers and their families. We are concerned that, without assistance, people will not be able to access their records, due to the need to travel to administrative centres, or in the worst case scenario, careless or deliberate destruction of the records. We think that a qualified, neutral body is needed to ensure security of data and equity of access.

We agree that there is a need to 'set the record straight', and that indigenous groups should be consulted as to the best way of achieving this.

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