

**SUBMISSION ON STOLEN WAGES  
BY  
LINK-UP (NSW) ABORIGINAL CORPORATION  
TO  
PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA:  
SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL  
REFERENCES COMMITTEE  
INQUIRY INTO STOLEN WAGES**

**4 OCTOBER 2006**

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**Attachment A      Submission made by Link-Up (NSW) in August  
2004 to the then NSW Aboriginal Trust Funds  
Reparation Scheme Panel**

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Link-Up (NSW) welcomes the Senate's Inquiry into the systems of control of Aboriginal labour, finances and other entitlements and would like to assist the Senate in this process.

This submission therefore provides:

- some background to Link-Up (NSW) and its involvement in this issue
- a brief discussion of the scope of the stolen wages issue
- a copy of the submission made by Link-Up (NSW) in August 2004 to the NSW Aboriginal Trust Funds Reparation Scheme Panel (as it was then called)
- an indication of ways in which Link-Up (NSW) could assist the Inquiry.

## **1.1 BACKGROUND TO LINK-UP (NSW)**

Link-Up (NSW) is an Aboriginal community controlled organisation that reunites Aboriginal people who have been separated from their families by past "welfare" policies.

It undertakes this work across NSW and, where clients' families are located elsewhere, in other Australian States/Territories and internationally.

The organisation's work is ongoing because:

- there are still many people who have not been reunited with the families and communities from which they were forcibly separated under these policies
- there are considerable intergenerational impacts from these forcible separations
- left unaddressed, these impacts will:
  - threaten Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing
  - create new generations of separated children and families.

(More information about Link-Up (NSW) is available at <http://www.linkupnsw.org.au/>.)

## **1.2 LINK-UP (NSW) AND STOLEN WAGES**

In NSW, stolen wages are inextricably linked with the forcible separation of Aboriginal children from their parents, as it was the status of these children as wards of the state that allowed government control of all aspects of their lives, including when and where they were sent to work, what type of work they did, and how their wages were managed.

Because of this, Link-Up (NSW) has for some time worked within the Aboriginal community, as well as with a broader network of groups, to address stolen wages issues. It advocated for the establishment of a NSW scheme to deal with these issues, and now provides support to Aboriginal people claiming repayment of monies owed to them from Trust Funds established - prior to 1969 - by the NSW Aborigines Protection Board and the NSW Aborigines Welfare Board. These support activities are funded by NSW Premier's Department from the NSW Aboriginal Trust Fund Repayment Scheme (ATFRS).

## **2.0 STOLEN WAGES - THE ISSUES**

Stolen Wages is one aspect of the external interventions which have been affecting Aboriginal peoples' lives since the time of European invasion.

These interventions, which eventually became formalised into government control systems, varied across the nation now known as Australia and generally included:

- removal of Aboriginal peoples from their lands
- attempts to wipe out Aboriginal identity and culture
- breaking up of families
- control of Aboriginal labour, finances and other entitlements.

Any attempt to deal with stolen wages needs to take account of:

- the ways this issue is entwined with the other aspects of government control of Aboriginal peoples' lives at the time
- the continuing impacts this has had on intergenerational disadvantage, including economic disadvantage and disadvantage in areas such as health and education.

This requires both repayment, at present day values, of monies owed, **and** reparation for the opportunities lost because Aboriginal people did not have access to those monies.

## **3.0 LINK-UP (NSW) AND THE INQUIRY**

Link-Up (NSW) can assist the Senate Committee in relation to:

- developing approaches that will allow individual Aboriginal people to participate fully in the Inquiry
- sharing its understanding of the:
  - impacts of stolen wages on Aboriginal individuals, families and communities
  - the ways in which these impacts are, in NSW, inextricably linked with the forcible separation of Aboriginal children from their families
  - the effects this has had on almost all Aboriginal people, even if they themselves did not have their labour controlled by government
  - the ways the system controlled monies and other entitlements, regardless of whether an individual's labour was controlled by government
  - the operation of the NSW ATFRS so far, including support for claimants.

Link-Up (NSW) has also attached a copy of the main part of the submission it made to the then NSW Aboriginal Trust Fund Reparation Panel on issues relating to Aboriginal Trust Funds. Some of these points remain relevant today.

Glendra Stubbs  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Link-Up (NSW) Aboriginal Corporation**

4 October 2006