

THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS) - VICTORIA REGIONAL MEETING
631 Orrong Rd., Toorak 3142
INDIGENOUS CONCERNS GROUP

Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

7th April, 2008

INQUIRY INTO THE STOLEN GENERATIONS COMPENSATION BILL 2008

We appreciate the opportunity to make a submission to the inquiry.

We are concerned the Federal Government has not announced plans to make compensatory payments to the Stolen Generations. Precedents have already been set for some Stolen Generations victims to receive compensation through the legal system; the courts understand that monetary compensation is right and just. The Tasmanian Government has recognized that a central State-run Compensation Fund is important and sensible in order to avoid additional trauma and cost. To consider no monetary payment appears to be a decision based on race. We see it as out of step with the concept of a 'fair go', widely seen as an Australian value. We suggest that if Cornelia Rau can be paid over \$2m, members of the Stolen Generations and their families are also deserving.

We support the establishment of a Stolen Generations Fund.
We would also support an ex-gratia payment with an additional amount for each year of institutionalisation IF, AND ONLY IF, these amounts are negotiated with a wide range of Indigenous people.

Many of the steps to healing have already been mapped out in the 'Bringing Them Home Report'. We urge the Committee to consider ways of implementing all 54 recommendations AND ensure wide and proper consultation with Stolen Generation members and Indigenous communities BEFORE finalising a payment plan for compensation.

Educational needs, appropriate housing and adequate medical requirements are the internationally-recognized rights of every human being, and therefore we do not support their provision under the banner of 'compensation'.

ALSO:

We ask that all fees be waived by the appropriate State/Territory government department for Stolen Generations members and their families who wish to reclaim their birth names.

We urge there be a widespread and sustained education campaign to ensure the Australian community knows the truth of what happened to the Stolen Generations, its emotional and spiritual impact on them, and the effect the forcible removal policies continues to have on the lives of Indigenous people today.

Yours sincerely,


Margaret Spong, Convenor