

National Sorry Day 2025



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National Sorry Day

On 26 May each year, Sorry Day marks the anniversary of the tabling of the Bringing Them Home report in the Australian Parliament in 1997 and commemorates Stolen Generations survivors. The report was a landmark truth telling process, sadly almost 30 years on a number of the report's 54 recommendations remain unmet.

Sorry Day offers an opportunity to reflect on the hardship faced when children were taken into institutional and foster care by governments and church agencies and placed with non-Indigenous families. These *Stolen Generations* suffered greatly from being removed from their loved ones at such an early age, and for many the scars were life-long. However, *Sorry Day* is also an opportunity to *"acknowledge the strength of Stolen Generations Survivors and reflect on how we can all play a part in the healing process for our people and nation."*

Remaining Stolen Generations survivors are ageing, and many do not have access to a full and fair redress scheme, or to the records that hold keys to their stories.

About National Sorry Day

National Sorry Day is held on 26 May each year, to remember and acknowledge the Stolen Generations and the history of forcible removals and its ongoing impacts.

The date marks the anniversary of the tabling of Bringing them home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families to the Australian Parliament in 1997. Sorry Day is an initiative that represents one of the recommendations of the report.

The colour purple is often associated with Sorry Day. This is the colour of the Native Hibiscus flower used by Stolen Generations survivors to recognise the scattering of the Stolen Generations and their strength and resilience. The flower survives in harsh conditions and the purple colour has been adopted as a symbol of compassion and healing.

About the Bringing Them Home report

The landmark ***Bringing them home report*** for the first time uncovered the truth of Australia's Stolen Generations history and shared this with the nation.

The report extensively documented the experiences of Stolen Generations and the families from whom they were forcibly removed. The report consisted of 54 recommendations that laid the way to redress the ongoing impacts of the removal policies and address ongoing trauma. These included a national apology, reparations, improved services and principles to govern a new framework and national minimum standards, and a process of monitoring the implementation of its recommendations.

A full generation after the inquiry's ***Bringing Them Home report 1*** was published in 1997 there remains outstanding and urgent unfinished business.

Nearly 30 years on, over two thirds of the 83 *Bringing Them Home* recommendations remain fully or partially unmet. **Only five – or just 6 percent – have been clearly implemented.** Now is the time for a comprehensive and systemic response to the report's recommendations to address survivors' pressing and complex needs. Survivors are dying, we must act before it is too late.

Who are the Stolen Generations?

The Stolen Generations refers to the tens of thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were forcibly removed from their families and communities between the early 1900s and the 1970s.

Stolen Generations children were removed as part of deliberate assimilation policies adopted by all Australian governments. The children were sent to institutions or adopted by non-Indigenous families. They were separated from their culture, family, land and identity and many of them suffered abuse and neglect.

The trauma of forced removal left many survivors with multiple complex and overlapping needs. They carry a legacy of social and economic disadvantage and often lack access to appropriate services, including to address their needs as they age. Their health and wellbeing is significantly worse than that of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of a similar age who were not removed.

In Australia, between 1910 and the 1970s*, governments, churches and welfare bodies forcibly removed many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. It's estimated that as many as one in three Indigenous children were taken from their families between 1910 and the 1970s—affecting most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Australia. These children became known as the Stolen Generations. Their removal was sanctioned by various government policies (AIATSIS 2022a), which have left a legacy of trauma and loss that continues to affect First Nations communities, families and individuals today.

Why were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children taken from their families?

The forcible removal of First Nations children from their families was based on [assimilation](#) policies, which claimed that the lives of First Nations people would be improved if they became part of white society. Assimilation policies proposed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples should be allowed to 'die out' through a process of natural elimination, or, where possible, assimilated into the white community (Behrendt 2012).

Children taken from their parents were denied access to their families, communities and cultures and taught to reject their First Nations heritage in favour of white culture. The children's names were often changed, and many children were forbidden from speaking First Nations languages. Some children were adopted by white families, and many children were placed in institutions where abuse and neglect were common (Behrendt 2012).

Information sourced from

Healing Foundations: <https://healingfoundation.org.au/sorry-day-factsheet/>

Australians Together: <https://australianstogether.org.au/discover-and-learn/our-history/stolen-generations>

Here's how organizations and churches can actively participate:

1. Raise Awareness and Education:

❖ **Share resources and materials:**

Download and use resources from organizations like Reconciliation Australia and The Healing Foundation, including posters, social media content, and fact sheets.

❖ **Organize events:**

Host events that educate members about the history of the Stolen Generations, the impact of intergenerational trauma, and the ongoing journey towards reconciliation.

❖ **Invite Indigenous voices:**

Invite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to share their stories and perspectives, offering a platform for their voices to be heard.

❖ **Use social media:**

Share social media content and hashtags (e.g., #NationalSorryDay, #UnfinishedBusiness, #BringingThemHome) to increase awareness and engage with the wider community.

❖ **Pray for healing:**

Include prayer for healing and restoration for the Stolen Generations and their descendants in the Mass.

Hold a special liturgy, prayer service for National Sorry to acknowledge the Stolen Generations and the history of forcible removals and its ongoing impacts and pray for healing and restoration for the Stolen Generations and their descendants

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