

February 13 is the 18th anniversary of the National Apology to the Stolen Generations. It is a day to remember, reflect, and push for real change.

Each year, 13 February offers an important time to reflect on how generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have been affected, and continue to be affected, by the past policies of the Australian Government and the ongoing impacts of this on the health and wellbeing of First Nations People

On this day in 2008, Kevin Rudd (then Prime Minister) made a formal apology to First Nations people and the Stolen Generations.

The Stolen Generations refers to the First Nations children and young people who were removed from their families by Australian federal and state government agencies and church missions between 1910 and 1970. This was the policy of assimilation.

“We apologise for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians. We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country.”

— KEVIN RUDD

Source: <https://www.commonground.org.au/article/first-nations-dates-significance-2022>

Why was the National Apology so important?

The National Apology was an historic acknowledgement of the wrongs done to the Stolen Generations.

National Apology Day, held every year on **13 February**, marks the day in 2008 when former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd delivered the official *Apology to Australia’s Indigenous Peoples*. His speech acknowledged the terrible harm caused to the **Stolen Generations**—First Nations children who were taken from their families under past government policies.


These removals left deep scars. Many children never made it back home, and the impact is still felt today through **ongoing trauma, loss of culture, and broken family connections**. Some survivors are still searching for relatives they were separated from decades ago.

National Apology Day is important because it gives all Australians a moment to pause and reflect on this history. It reminds us to listen to the voices of survivors, recognise their pain, and honour their strength.

It offers space for healing, an opportunity for people affected to feel **seen, heard, and supported**. For the rest of us, it’s a reminder that acknowledging the past is essential if we want to build a more fair, respectful, and inclusive future and reminds us of the responsibility we share to learn from history and work together toward a more just, equitable, and inclusive future.

At its heart, National Apology Day encourages everyone to keep working toward **reconciliation**, understanding, and real, lasting change.

It was a significant step towards building a respectful new relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The impact of the Apology is evidence of the importance of historical acceptance, which is one of the five dimensions we use to describe and measure reconciliation in our Reconciliation Action Plans. Historical acceptance is not just about accepting and understanding our shared history and its



ongoing impacts – it's about making sure that Australia does what is necessary to ensure past wrongs are never repeated

The Bringing Them Home report found that forced removal has had life-long and profoundly destructive consequences for those taken. These policies continued right up until the 1970s and many of those affected by the trauma are still alive today.

Stolen children lost connection to family, land, culture and language and were taken to homes and institutions where they were often abused, neglected and unloved. The mothers, fathers and family who were left behind also suffered from the loss.

Source: Reconciliation Australia

