

# National Sorry Day 2026



ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE  
**RECONCILIATION  
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## **National Sorry Day**

Observed on 26 May each year, National Sorry Day marks the anniversary of the tabling of the *Bringing Them Home* report in the Australian Parliament in 1997 and honours Stolen Generations survivors. This landmark report was a significant truth-telling moment in Australia's history. However, nearly 30 years on, a number of its 54 recommendations remain unmet.

Sorry Day provides an important opportunity to reflect on the profound hardship experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were forcibly removed from their families and placed into institutional or foster care by governments and church agencies. Many of these children were placed with non-Indigenous families, and the impacts of these removals have been lifelong, affecting individuals, families and communities across generations.

At the same time, National Sorry Day is a time to recognise and honour the strength and resilience of Stolen Generations survivors. It encourages all Australians to reflect on how we can contribute to healing for First Nations peoples and for the nation as a whole.

This year marks the 29th anniversary of the *Bringing Them Home* report. The national theme, "**From Sorry to Action,**" calls for urgent, meaningful steps to achieve tangible and measurable change within survivors' lifetimes.

National Sorry Day is also a time to acknowledge the ongoing grief and trauma experienced by those affected, while recognising the continuing needs of ageing survivors today.

## **About National Sorry Day**

National Sorry Day is held on 26 May each year, to remember and acknowledge the Stolen Generations and the Aboriginal children forcibly removed from their families, communities, Country, language and Culture under previous government policies.

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 83 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.

In 2024 The Healing Foundation commissioned research and undertook significant consultation with Stolen Generations survivors and their organisations to fully understand progress in implementing the Bringing them home recommendations, and to outline urgent and outstanding priorities for action.

Urgent priorities include;

- Easier access to records, both public and private collections
- Culturally safe and appropriate aged care that doesn't re-traumatise people
- Equitable redress for survivors in all states and territories.
- Investment in vital services on the ground, particularly for Stolen Generations organisations.

Nearly 30 years on, over two thirds of the 83 *Bringing Them Home report* recommendations remain fully or partially unmet. ***Only 6 percent has 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 mid-1800s until the 1980's.

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 National Sorry Day

[https://healingfoundation.org.au/media/wbyo43ay/thf\\_sorry\\_day\\_2025\\_fact\\_sheet\\_a4\\_flyer-2.pdf](https://healingfoundation.org.au/media/wbyo43ay/thf_sorry_day_2025_fact_sheet_a4_flyer-2.pdf)

The Healing Foundation's Stolen Generations Resource kit for Teachers and Students.

<https://healingfoundation.org.au/resources/education-toolkits-lesson-plans/>

Healing Our Way podcast <https://healingfoundation.org.au/resources/healing-our-way-podcast/>

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

### **Useful resources**

Here are some resources that might be helpful:

- 1997 [\*Bringing them home\* report](#)
- 1998 [Social Justice Report of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission](#)
- 2001 [Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee Report, HEALING: A legacy of generations](#)
- 2003 [Ministerial Council for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs \(MCATSIA\) evaluation](#)
- 2007 [Evaluation of BTH Indigenous Mental Health Programs](#)
- 2015 [Bringing them home Scorecard Report](#)
- 2017 [Bringing them home 20 years on: an action plan for healing](#)

- 2021 [Make Healing Happen](#)
- 2025 [National Healing Package budget submission](#)
- 2025 [Are You Waiting For Us To Die? The Unfinished Business of Bringing them home](#)

Here's how organizations and churches can actively participate:

### 1. Raise Awareness and Education:

#### ❖ **Share resources and materials:**

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

#### ❖ **Organise 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 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 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**

#### ❖ **Learn more and share knowledge. Understanding and sharing the truth of Australia's Stolen Generations history is critical to healing and truth-telling.**

#### ❖ **Attend a local event. Many community organisations will hold local Sorry Day events; you can find info at [healingfoundation.org.au](http://healingfoundation.org.au).**

#### ❖ **Visit the Healing Foundation website to learn more about supporting ageing survivors. You'll find resources to share, our Sorry Day social media kit and more.**

**CONTACT DETAILS**

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