

To this day I believe my Mum and Dad died of a broken heart.

To find my family was a burden lifted off my shoulders.

I love my brothers and sister.

It gives me great sorrow my mum and dad never got to

He would make you feel at ease and so funny.

find my sister or me and I never met them.

Gee, just reminds me. I love his outgoing personality.

My older sister told me mum and dad never gave up

Grace was so glad she met her brothers and sisters

looking for their two stolen children.

before she passed on.

They passed on not knowing us.

Us Taken-Away Kids

‘Commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Bringing them home report’



Human Rights and Equal
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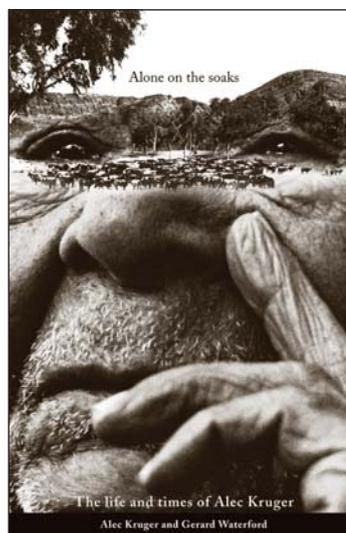
Artist: Beverley Grant
Title: 'Leaving the Mission', 2007
Symbolism: Browns, reds, yellows and black represent the people, land, sun and the mission. White represents the spiritual connection between the people and the land
Story: Leaving the missionaries and the Mission, to find family and to commence nursing in mainstream in 1967- the year of the referendum for Aboriginal recognition and citizenship. Footprints signify return to family, people and homeland.



Artist: Beverley Grant
Title: 'Coming Home', 2007
Symbolism: Brown, reds and black represent the people and the land. White represents the spiritual connection between the people and the land.
Story: The family sitting around our circle, participating in a smoking ceremony down by the Lachlan River, NSW. Footprints signify return to family, people and homeland.



'Us taken-away kids', quotation taken from Alec Kruger and Gerard Waterford, *Alone on the soaks*, IAD Press, 2007. All quotes reproduced with permission from the authors.



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Dad died of a broken heart.

I love my brothers and sister.

Commemorating the 10th Anniversary of the
Bringing them home report

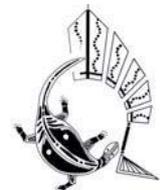
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Please be aware that this publication contains the names and images
of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may now be deceased.

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Edited by Christina Kenny.

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Disclaimer

The material in this publication includes views and recommendations of individual contributing authors, which do not necessarily reflect the views of HREOC or indicate its commitment to a particular course of action.

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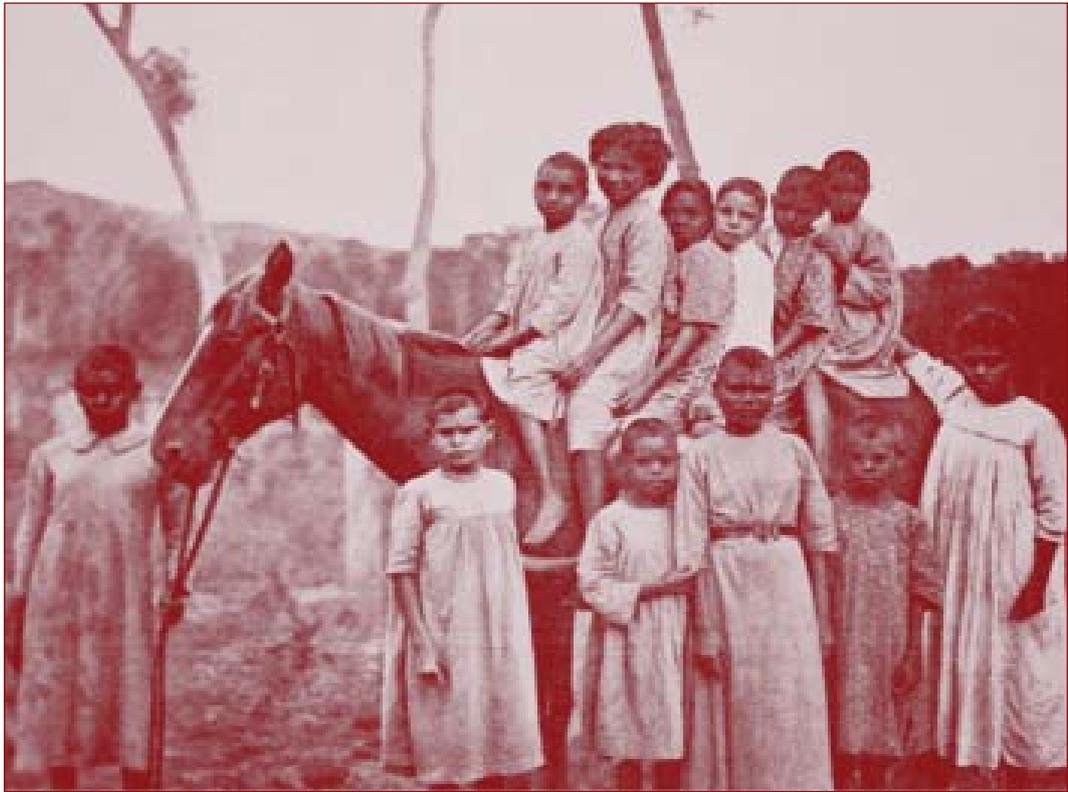
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“As a child I had no mother’s arms to hold me. No father to lead me into the world. Us taken-away kids only had each other. All of us damaged and too young to know what to do. We had strangers standing over us. Some were nice and did the best they could. But many were just cruel nasty types. We were flogged often. We learnt to shut up and keep our eyes to the ground, for fear of being singled out and punished. We lived in dread of being sent away again where we could be even worse off. Many of us grew up hard and tough. Others were explosive and angry. A lot grew up just struggling to cope at all. They found their peace in other institutions or alcohol. Most of us learnt how to occupy a small space and avoid anything that looked like trouble. We had few ideas about relationships. No one showed us how to be lovers or parents. How to feel safe loving someone when that risked them being taken away and leaving us alone again. Everyone and everything we loved was taken away from us kids.”

– Alec Kruger



Foreword

The contributors to this publication come from every part of Australia. They are sons and daughters, mothers and grandmothers, fathers and grandfathers. They are orphans, scholars, single parents, teachers, prisoners, healers, jillaroos and football stars. Many continue to suffer the effects of removal, manifesting in drug abuse, incarceration and mental illness. Thank you for sharing your stories with us, and shedding more light on what was up until recently, a taboo topic in Australia's history. Each of you took a great risk. You looked into the corners of your hearts that hold your most painful memories and generously shared them with a national audience. For many of you, it was the first time you were writing about your experience, or publicly displaying your artwork.

Story telling continues to be crucial to the resilience of Aboriginal peoples - stories pass on our history, our identity. Storytelling is an indispensable part of both the recognition of suffering and the journey of healing.

To commemorate the 10th anniversary of the publication of the *Bringing them home report*, it is fitting that we should look to those whose stories of removal formed the basis of the report and its recommendations. With this in mind, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission invited Indigenous peoples across Australia to tell us their experiences of removal, their thoughts ten years on from the Inquiry and their hopes for the future. The poetry, stories and artwork featured in *Us Taken-Away Kids* are the fruits of this invitation.

The publication begins with a chronological overview of the legislation and events which have shaped the lives of Australian Aborigines since colonisation. This is followed by three themed sections. 'Mother' and 'Journeys and Homecoming' deal with the experiences in the life journey of a stolen child. 'Reconciliation' includes non- Indigenous as well as Indigenous peoples' thoughts on moving forward, to a more inclusive vision for black and white Australia- the voices of the longest surviving continuous culture in the world, united with those of their fellow Australians.

For Aboriginal people, the years since the *Bringing them home report* have been filled with great hope as well as lost opportunities. While there have been positive developments and initiatives, many opportunities for governments to work with our communities and advance the goal of national reconciliation have been lost.

However, amidst these disappointments, there are still reasons to hope. The 2006 Tasmanian Stolen Generations compensation package is a great step forward in the resolution of the generations of suffering inflicted on Tasmanian Aboriginal people. But the vast majority of the Stolen Generations are still waiting for this validation.

Positive steps have also been made in the recognition of native title. The successful Noongar native title claim earlier this year that covers much of Perth and the surrounding area demonstrates that two systems of land title can and should legitimately co-exist.

More recently, the decision by the Supreme Court of South Australia to award damages to Bruce Trevorrow in recognition of the harm he suffered through illegal removal from his family is another step in the right direction. However, Mr Trevorrow's victory, like that of the Noongar claimants, only came after years of litigation because the respective state governments and others opposed their claims. I am mindful at the time of publication that both decisions may still be appealed.

These victories for social justice are a strong reminder that all Australians – black and white - must continue to strive for a process of true and lasting reconciliation. The goal of mutual respect and cultural understanding will not be borne out of adversarial processes that pit citizens against their governments. Rather, as a nation, we need to acknowledge the human rights violations that have occurred and accept that everyone affected by forcible removals is entitled to reparation and compensation.

Ten years on, the recommendations of the *Bringing them home report* still stand as the starting point for a national reconciliation process. I call on all Australian governments to implement those recommendations in full, with all possible urgency, so that all Australians can reach their full potential.

Us *Taken- Away Kids* is a testament to the resilience of Aboriginal people, our ability to overcome adversity, to look to a brighter future, and to triumph in the face of desolation and despair.

The storytellers within are more than the faces of Indigenous Australia. These people are the voices of our living history. Their stories are laden with tragedy, loneliness and loss. But never far away is their inexplicable optimism. A hope for the future, for our children, for the Australian nation.



Tom Calma
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner

Track the History

This timeline focuses on one particular aspect of the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples - the forcible removal of Indigenous children from their families.

This material identifies some significant laws and practices that made removal lawful and includes writing and artwork from members of the Stolen Generations and their families which illustrate their experiences of these policies. This section uses as its primary resource *Bringing them home*, the report of the *National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*. It also draws on documents and information from a wide range of other sources. The chronology particularly focuses on significant events and legal developments in the 10 years after the publication of the *Bringing them home* report, between 1997 and 2007.

A more detailed timeline, government responses to the 10th Anniversary and other information can be found on our website www.humanrights.gov.au/bth



1770 James Cook claims possession of the whole east coast of Australia. Cook raises the British flag at Possession Island, off Cape York Peninsula in Queensland.

1788 The First Fleet lands in Port Jackson - British settlement in Australia begins. Clashes between Aboriginal people and the settlers are reported over the next 10 years in the Parramatta and Hawkesbury areas outside the main settlement areas.

- 1830** Tasmanian Aborigines are resettled on Flinders Island without success. Later the community is moved to Cape Barren Island.
- 1837** The British Select Committee examines the treatment of indigenous peoples in all British colonies and recommends that 'Protectors of Aborigines' be appointed in Australia.
- 1838** The Myall Creek Massacre, near Inverell (NSW). Settlers shoot 28 Aboriginal people, mostly women and children. 11 Europeans are charged with murder but are acquitted. A new trial is held and seven men are charged with the murder of one Aboriginal child. They are found guilty and hanged.
- 1869** *The Aborigines Protection Act (Vic)* establishes an Aborigines Protection Board in Victoria to manage the interests of Aborigines. The Governor can order the removal of any Aboriginal child from their family to a reformatory or industrial school.
- 1883** The NSW Aborigines Protection Board is established to manage reserves and the lives of 9,000 people.
- 1897** *The Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act (Qld)* allows the Chief Protector to remove local Aboriginal people onto and between reserves and to hold children in dormitories. Until 1965 the Director of Native Welfare is the legal guardian of all 'aboriginal' children whether the parents are living or not.



School, Mornington Island, 1950.
Photograph reproduced courtesy of the State Library of Queensland and the community of Mornington Island.

1901 **Australia becomes a Federation.** The Constitution states that Aboriginal People shall not be counted in the census, and that the Commonwealth has the power to make laws relating to any race of people in Australia with the exception of Aborigines. The federated states therefore retain exclusive power over Aboriginal affairs until the Constitution is amended in 1967.

1905 The *Aborigines Act* (WA) is passed. Under this law, the Chief Protector is made the legal guardian of every Aboriginal and 'half-caste' child under 16 years old. In the following years, other states and territories enact similar laws.

1909 The *Aborigines Protection Act* (NSW) gives the Aborigines Protection Board power "to assume full control and custody of the child of any Aborigine" if a court finds the child to be neglected under the *Neglected Children and Juvenile Offenders Act 1905* (NSW).

1911 *Aborigines Act* (SA) makes the Chief Protector the legal guardian of every Aboriginal and 'half-caste' child with additional wide-ranging powers to remove Indigenous people to and from reserves.

The *Northern Territory Aborigines Ordinance* (Cth) gives the Chief Protector powers to assume "the care, custody or control of any Aboriginal or half caste if in his opinion it is necessary or desirable in the interests of the Aboriginal or half caste for him to do so." The *Aborigines Ordinance 1918* (Cth) extends the Chief Protector's control even further.

1928 The Coniston Massacre, Northern Territory. Europeans shoot 32 Aborigines after a white dingo trapper and station owner are attacked by Aborigines. A court of inquiry says the action of the Europeans' is 'justified'.

1935 The introduction of the *Infants Welfare Act* (Tas) is used to remove Indigenous children on Cape Barren Island from their families. From 1928 until 1980 the head teacher on Cape Barren is appointed a special constable with the powers and responsibilities of a police constable, including the power to remove a child for neglect under child welfare legislation.

1937 The first Commonwealth / State conference on 'native welfare' adopts assimilation as the national policy: "The destiny of the natives of aboriginal origin, but not of the full blood, lies in ultimate absorption ... with a view to their taking their place in the white community on an equal footing with the whites."

In 1951, at the third Commonwealth / State Conference on 'native welfare', assimilation is affirmed as the aim of 'native welfare' measures.

'Group of Warriors from tribes west of Hermannsburg, Central Australia',
Photographs of Australian Aborigines, Aborigines' Friends' Association, Adelaide, 1936. Courtesy of Ivan Copely.

Lake Tyres,
Aboriginal Station,
Aug. 14th, 1930.
Most Excellency Lord Stonehaven,
State Governor,
Canberra House, N.S.W.

I'm a full - blooded Aboriginal by birth decent from Royal Blood. I used to write letters to Queen Victoria in my young days. Your most Excellency, I beg to ask of his Excellency a great favour - would his Excellency kindly grant me permission to get my three grand - children who were snatched suddenly from me by an Ordering Council under escort of Nurse Singleton from Lake Tyres Aboriginal Reserve, transferred to the State Public Home, Melbourne. Three girls ages ranging from 13 years, 5¼ years, baby 2½ years Mary Darby, Sarah Darby and Nelly Darby. The three girls were my only comfort when their mother Lizzie Darby, my daughter, expired nine months ago at the Bairnsdalegate Hospital. When we came down to the town Captain Newman made a covenant with me in the presence of Patrol Walter M' Cready, that I could have the three grand - daughters till such time I'd be married. On the eve of my marriage to Mrs. Edwards who looked after and never neglected the children, they were snatched away by an Ordering Council. I wish to bring under your Excellency's consideration the matter. I was decoyed to marry for the sake of the three grand - daughters, to keep them, and for them to be snatched away by an Ordering Council. God is no respecter of persons. We are in His sight equal to all His subjects. Before the white people came to Australia. God gave us children to bring and train up for His service in our own disposition. Our disposition is instilled in our children and I don't consider it fair the white people should deprive us of our children to bring them up in their disposition. It can never be done.

*I am, Yr. obedient servant ,
(SGD.) Frederick Carmichael*

- Helen Baldwin

"I was born on Cape Barren Island off the North East Coast of Tasmania, but my stay on the island was not to be very long. The reason being that my Mother died when I was 5 days old, and to this day I do not know who my father was. As a result, along with my sister and brother we were left in the care of my Grandmother. At the age of 2 months the Police and Welfare officers came to the Island and took me away along with my brother and sister, there I was made a ward of the State and institutionalized. I was to spend the time from 2 months to 21 years of age in this Institution. I will always believe that I was taken under the Assimilation policy and also denied my Aboriginality."

- Eddie Thomas

- 1938** Australian Aborigines Conference is held in Sydney. Meeting on January 26, the 150th Anniversary of NSW, Aborigines mark the first 'Day of Mourning'.
- 1948** *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* is adopted by the newly-formed United Nations, and supported by Australia.
- 1949** *The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* is ratified by Australia. It comes into force in 1951.
- 1967** A national **Referendum** is held to amend the Constitution. Australians confer power on the Commonwealth to make laws for Aboriginal people. Aborigines are included in the census for the first time.
- 1969** By 1969, all states had repealed the legislation allowing for the removal of Aboriginal children under the policy of 'protection'. In the following years, Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agencies ("AICCCAs") are set up to contest removal applications and provide alternatives to the removal of Indigenous children from their families.
- 1975** The Commonwealth Parliament passes the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*.
- 1976** The *Aboriginal Land Rights Act (NT)* is passed by the Commonwealth Parliament. It provides for recognition of Aboriginal land ownership, granting land rights to 11,000 Aboriginal people and enabling other Aboriginal people to lodge a claim for recognition of traditional ownership of their lands.
- 1980** Link-Up (NSW) Aboriginal Corporation is established. It is followed by Link-Up (Brisbane) in 1984, Link-Up (Darwin) in 1989, Link-Up (Tas) in 1991, Link-Up (Vic) in 1992, Link-Up (SA) in 1999, Link-Up (Alice Springs) in 2000, and Link-Up (WA- seven sites) in 2001. Link-Up provides family tracing, reunion and support for forcibly removed children and their families.
- 1981** Secretariat of the National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) is established. SNAICC represents the interests on a national level of Australia's 100 or so Indigenous community-controlled children's service organisations.
- 1983** The Aboriginal Child Placement Principle, developed principally due to the efforts of Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agencies ("AICCCAs") during the 1970s, is incorporated in NT welfare legislation to ensure that Indigenous children are placed with Indigenous families when adoption or fostering is necessary. This is followed in New South Wales (1987), Victoria (1989), South Australia (1993), Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory (1999), Tasmania (2000) and Western Australia (2006).
- 1987** Northern Territory elections are held and for the first time voting is compulsory for Aboriginal people.
- The Bicentennial of British Settlement** in Australia takes place. Thousands of Indigenous people and supporters march through the streets of Sydney to celebrate cultural and physical survival.



My name was Mark Saunders until I met my family and found my real name is Alfred Coolwell. I had been searching for my family since I was a young adult and had no luck. My Foster family, I now know, lied to me a lot. They said I was from WA- not from just down the road from Ipswich at Beaudesert, that I was adopted, not fostered- my family didn't give me up. They said I left on the railway line, not stolen from my hospital bed where I was being treated for pneumonia.

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Lena Yarry and I would like to write a few words relating to how I feel about being taken from my parents and the effects it had on me.

I am the oldest of seven children, Grace (dec), Leila (dec), Richard, Margaret, Alfred and Victor. Dad had another son, Cyril Richard Gomes by another woman from Coraki, NSW her name was Daphne.

When I first met my brother Alf and sister Marg was one day we were travelling to Ipswich to visit my Aunty Grace (Dad's sister) and Mum spotted them going to the butcher shop. She told the cabbie to stop while I ran inside to tell them who I was and that mum was in the cab. Margaret didn't want a bar of it but Alf sneaked a phone number to me. I was so happy and Mum and I was overcome with emotion we were crying and telling our cousins about it. It really hurt me because I know Mum and Dad were trying to find them and the Native Affairs (at that time) would never reveal their whereabouts.

This photo was taken the day I met my family. I travelled up to Brisbane from Sydney to join the protest in 1988 at the opening of the Expo Exhibition. I lead the march playing the didgeridoo into Musgrave Park. There, my sister Gracie recognised me (because I looked so much like my brother) and tapped me on the shoulder and said, 'stay there, I am getting your family'. I felt overwhelmed, excited and tearful. I was introduced to lots of relatives, learnt about my parents, my early life and the history of my mob.

To this day I believe my Mum and Dad died of a broken heart. I love my brothers and sister. Meeting Alf was the best. He would make you feel at ease and so funny. Gee, just reminds me of me. I love his outgoing personality. Grace was so glad she met out brothers and sister before she passed on.

To find my family was a burden lifted off my shoulders. It gives me great sorrow my Mum and dad never got to find my sister or me and I never met them My older sister told me mum and Dad never gave up looking for their two stolen children. They passed on not knowing us.

I thank God I met them all.

Love, Lena.

PS: The Government think they know what they're doing but they ruined my family and our lives.

Alfred Coolwell (second from left) with his family on the day he met first met them at Murggrave Park, 1988. Photograph courtesy of Emily Bullock.

Mission Breed

I grew up on an old Bre Mission
You might know the name,
It wasn't Dodge or Barwon Four
This place made me shame
It was here the welfare man
Kept me from my mother
He said in court "We're taking you
To put you with your brothers"
"You dirty low down good for nothing"

*The mission man would say,
"You dirty low thing, no hoper"*

His words never fade away
Snatched from friends and family
From Bourke they took me far
Away from all I knew and loved
To a kids home called Bethcar
One hundred kays northeast of Bourke
'Bout seven miles out of Bre
Were thirty odd little Koori kids
They all looked just like me
Moonie, Monkey, Moothie, Rabbit,
Crusty Nuts, Friggity,
Dog, Cat, Big Ears, Bandicoot,
Mouse, Pointy Bum, Sadie,
Dora, Big Lips, Doody Towel,
Names that come to mind
I can't remember all of them
Memories fade with time

*This little mob of mission breeds
Affectionately known
Became the only family
That I could call my own
We all grew up eventually
And some got into strife
Some stayed in Bre, some moved away
To find a better life
One thing for sure I miss you all
dream of going back
'tis seventeen years since last drove
That old familiar track
The day'll come when I'll arrive
Cruise on into town
I'll park down near the old fish traps
Have a look around
Then head toward the Barwon Bridge
Drive a mile or two
Turn right off the bitumen
Follow it right through
So until then I'll quietly wait
Until I can head out
To satisfy this ancient urge
The one called walkabout
We'll laugh, we'll cry, well drink some grog
Then we'll reminisce
About the life that we once lived
*Growing up out on the mish.**

- David Nolan, Possum Wiradjuri.

Cherbourg State School, 1959.

*Photograph reproduced courtesy of the State Library of Queensland and the community of Cherbourg.
Right-left: Vincent Serico, Adrian Jones, Jennifer Combo, Sheila Chernside, Pansy Colonel.
Boys on left: Robin O'Chin (handing our fruit), John Stanely, Glen Brown (standing near post)*

1991 The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation is set up, funded by the Commonwealth Government. Parliament noted that there had not been a formal process of reconciliation to date, “and that it was most desirable that there be such a reconciliation by 2001.”

The **Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody** presents its report to the Commonwealth Government. It finds that of the 99 deaths it investigated, 43 were of people who were separated from their families as children.

Jap

*Am I the only one who remembers Jap
Who knew 'Jenny' was her real name
The only one who remembers
How Jenny, at 18, died
Alone
Her lithe and beautiful body
Broken
And bleeding on the concrete floor
Of a lonely convict cell
Her bold, defiant laughter snatched
Forever from this world
With the snapping
Crack!
Of a police issue boot
On the back of her neck
I wonder if the cop remembers
The feel of her young body
Crushed
Despoiled
And lifeless beneath his heel
Has he slept well
These past thirty years
With his conscience
And his memory
Of a dark-skinned girl
With a long proud neck
And glowing dark eyes
Does he remember Jap
I do*

– Vickie Roach

“Jenny ‘Jap’, was 18 years old when she died in police custody. Jap and I became close friends when we were about 11 years old in a juvenile detention centre together. We were later reunited aged 17 in women’s prison. Jap’s death a year later was one of the still mounting tide of Aboriginal deaths in custody.” – Vickie Roach

1992 The High Court of Australia hands down its landmark decision in *Mabo v Queensland No.2*. It decides that native title exists over particular kinds of lands – unalienated Crown Lands, national parks and reserves - and that Australia was never *terra nullius* or empty land.

“On this 15th Anniversary of the High Court Decision in the Mabo case, we should indeed celebrate the hard work and achievements of Eddie Mabo and the other Meriam applicants. But at the same time, let us not pretend that the decision by the High Court recognised our land rights as we understand them, as we understand our responsibilities for country and connections with each other. We know that the High Court attempted to accommodate Indigenous law and custom within the colonial common law, but it was only able to understand our law and custom from within the framework of Eurocentric colonial legal and political systems.”

– Mick Dodson, Native Title Conference, 'Tides of Native Title', Cairns 7 June 2007

1993 International Year of Indigenous People. The United Nations declares the 'International Year for the World's Indigenous People'. Subsequently, 1994- 2003 is declared the first 'International Decade for the World's Indigenous People'.

The Commonwealth Government passes the *Native Title Act 1993*. This law allows Indigenous people to make land claims under certain situations. Claims cannot be made on freehold land (privately-owned land).

The position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner is established within the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC). The Commissioner's role is to monitor and report to the Commonwealth Parliament on the human rights of Indigenous Australians.

1994 The *Going Home* Conference in Darwin brings together over 600 Aboriginal people removed as children to discuss common goals of access to archives, compensation, rights to land and social justice.

1995 The *National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families* is established by the Commonwealth Government in response to efforts made by key Indigenous agencies and communities.

1996 The High Court hands down its decision in the *Wik* case concerning land which is, or has been, subject to pastoral leases.

1997 HREOC presents *Bringing them home*, its report on the findings of the *National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*, to the Commonwealth Government. The parliaments and governments of Victoria, Tasmania, ACT, New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia all issue statements recognising and publicly apologising to the 'Stolen Generations'.

"In my life, I have seen my people face hostility and rejection and cruelty on more occasions than I would care to recall.

But nothing could have prepared me for the days I spent with my co-Commissioners listening as people spoke the truth of their lives for the first time.

Of being taken away from their mothers at three weeks of age.
Of mothers waiting a lifetime to see their babies' faces again.
They came before this Inquiry, and they told us of being sent to institutions 'for their own good'.

Institutions without the loving arms of aunties and grandmas. But rather cat-o-nine tails and porridge with weevils and frightening adults who came into your room at night.

They recalled being told that their parents had given them away because they did not love them. And they told me what it was like to be taught to hate Aborigines and then turn that hate against your own history, your own mother and yourself...

This nation is proud of its rule of law.
Proud of its sense of justice and a fair go.
One of those laws is that if you steal something and you are caught, you have to give it back.

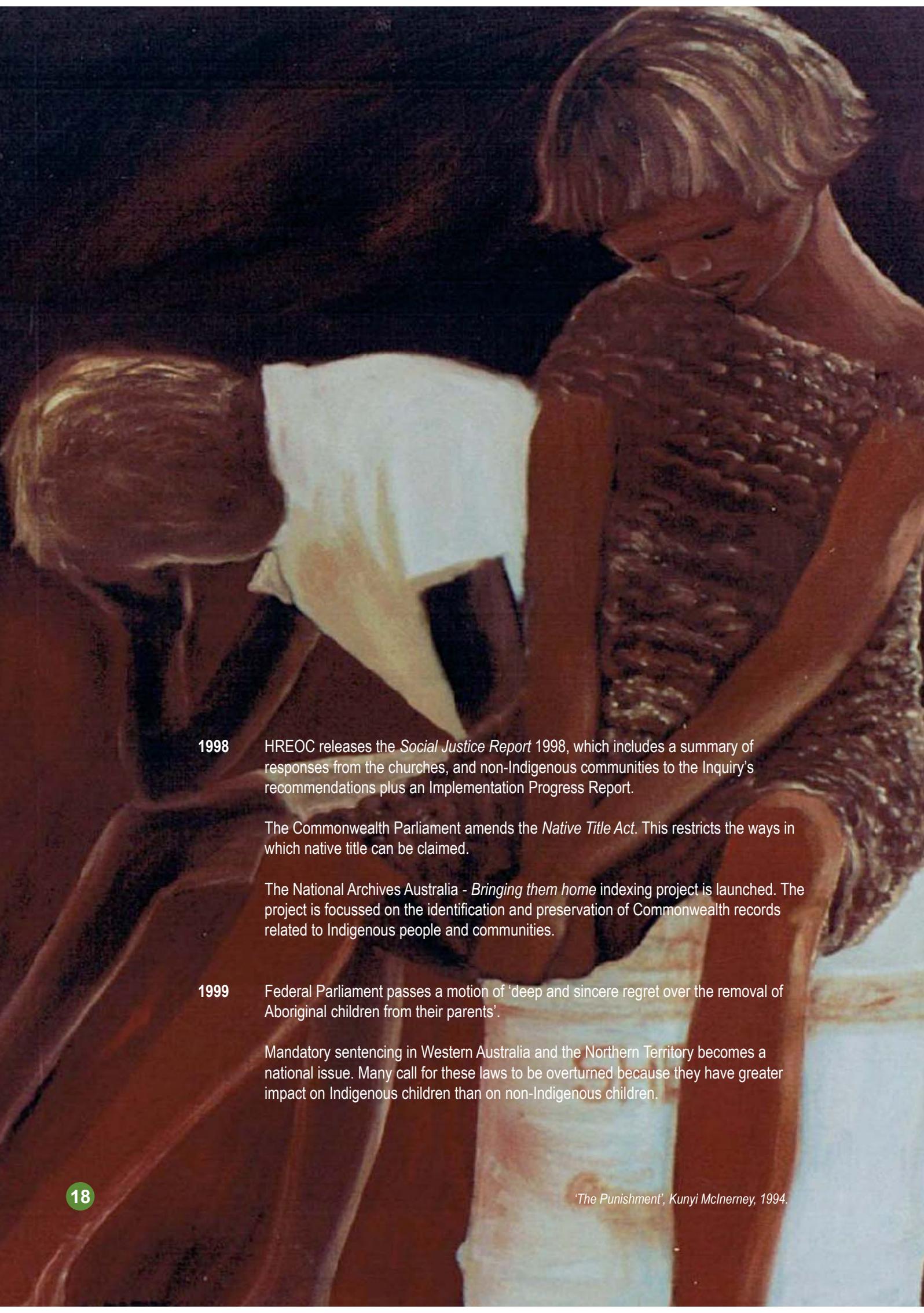
This nation has stolen.
From parents and families and communities it has stolen children.
From children it has stolen love, and family; language and culture; land and identity.

It committed a grievous crime.
It is time to pay for that crime."

– the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Mick Dodson, launch speech of the *Bringing them home* report, 1997

1997 ***Kruger & Ors v The Commonwealth (1997)***

Alec Kruger and others lose their court case against the Commonwealth when the High Court finds that the Northern Territory Ordinance under which Aboriginal children families were removed was constitutionally valid. This case also discussed whether the policies of forcible removal could be considered genocide. The Court held that while the Ordinance did allow children to be forcibly removed, the intent of the Ordinance was not to 'destroy...their racial group', the definition of genocide in the *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* (the Genocide Convention) which Australia has signed.



1998 HREOC releases the *Social Justice Report 1998*, which includes a summary of responses from the churches, and non-Indigenous communities to the Inquiry's recommendations plus an Implementation Progress Report.

The Commonwealth Parliament amends the *Native Title Act*. This restricts the ways in which native title can be claimed.

The National Archives Australia - *Bringing them home* indexing project is launched. The project is focussed on the identification and preservation of Commonwealth records related to Indigenous people and communities.

1999 Federal Parliament passes a motion of 'deep and sincere regret over the removal of Aboriginal children from their parents'.

Mandatory sentencing in Western Australia and the Northern Territory becomes a national issue. Many call for these laws to be overturned because they have greater impact on Indigenous children than on non-Indigenous children.

2000 **The People’s Walk for Reconciliation** on 28 May occurs in state and territory capitals throughout Australia. The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation presents the Prime Minister with its declaration and four strategies to achieve reconciliation at the Corroboree 2000 Ceremony held at the Sydney Opera House.

Australia appears before the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The Committee expresses concern about the Commonwealth Government’s decision not to provide a national apology or to consider monetary compensation for those forcibly removed from their families as the *Bringing them home* report recommended.

An inquiry into the federal government’s implementation of the recommendations in the *Bringing them home* report is undertaken by the Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee. The Senate Committee tables its report *Healing: A Legacy of Generations* in November 2000 and makes ten recommendations. These concentrate on the need for ongoing reporting and monitoring of responses to the *Bringing them home* report and the establishment of a reparations tribunal.

The Australian Government’s submission to the inquiry is presented by Senator Herron and includes the propositions that ‘there never was a generation of stolen children’ and ‘the proportion of separated Aboriginal children was no more than 10 per cent’.

Final report of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation is presented to the Prime Minister and the Commonwealth Parliament. One of its six recommendations is that the Parliament enact legislation to address a range of unresolved issues, including the effective implementation of the *Bringing them home* report recommendations.

The case of ***Williams v The Minister, Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983*** [2001] fails. Joy Williams loses her appeal in the New South Wales Supreme Court of Appeal alleging the NSW Government breached its duty of care by removing her from her mother soon after birth. Joy had sought compensation for the harm and mental illness she suffered as a result of removal.

The case of ***Cubillo and Gunner v Commonwealth*** (2000) in the Federal Court of Australia fails. Lorna Cubillo was removed from her family in Tennant Creek and placed in the Retta Dixon home in Darwin in 1947. Peter Gunner was removed in 1956 and placed in the St Mary’s Hostel in Alice Springs. Both claimed they were seriously assaulted during their time in these institutions. Their claims failed for several reasons including a lack of evidence. Between 25 and 35 years had passed between their institutionalisation and the court case. Many records had been lost or destroyed; many of the people involved were dead; and the laws at the time of their removal allowed officials to remove children for reasons other than their own welfare.

"I jumped when I heard a screw call my name and looked up to see him beckon me with his fat finger. I dropped my broom and walked over to where he was standing on the corner of the isolation block. Well, he grabbed hold of me and shoved me inside. I can remember him starting to hit me, but can't remember what he was saying. Then he grabbed me by the back of the neck and slammed my head into the corner of the brick wall. I wondered if he was going to keep beating me till I was dead. I remember later, sporting the bruises, swelling and abrasions, I complained to Mrs S. that I was going to do to someone about his treatment of me. Her response was, 'we'll just say you fell over'."

- Jeannie Hayes

2001 The Northern Territory Government repeals its mandatory sentencing laws. The same year, the Northern Territory Government presents a parliamentary motion of apology to people who were removed from their families.

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and the Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) hold the *Moving Forward* Conference. The conference aims to explore ways of providing reparations to Indigenous people forcibly removed from their families.

"As a nation we now find ourselves in a position where we can no longer forget or ignore the truth of our past. The author Milan Kundera has noted that 'forgetting... is absolute injustice and absolute solace at the same time'. Such 'absolute solace', or 'ignorance is bliss', is no longer an option for Australian society. *Bringing them home* has forced us to challenge some of the myths of settlement and colonisation - myths which one academic has described as having previously operated in Australia as 'a self-constructing form of repression'.

It is now just over four years since the release of *Bringing them home*. It is uncontroversial to note that there is now broad community acknowledgement of the history of those forcibly removed. We cannot under-estimate how important this recognition is. However, it is but the first step in a process of healing and of addressing the consequences of this history...

This devastation inflicted upon Indigenous communities by forcible removal policies cannot reasonably be described as a distraction, or as being of little relevance to the day to day lives of its victims. Responding to forcible removals is also clearly about what the Minister describes as 'the often forgotten needs' such as the ability of people to take control of their own lives...

Our national government owes us more than practicality in responding to a human tragedy of the scale inflicted upon the Aboriginal peoples of this nation. After four years of inaction, it is time to move forward the debate on forcible removal policies and focus on the real issues, by developing mechanisms for reparations and for healing."

- the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Dr William Jonas,
Speech at *Moving Forward: Achieving Reparations for the Stolen Generations*, Sydney, 2001

2002 The *Social Justice Report 2001* and *Native Title Report 2001* are tabled in the Australian Parliament. Both reports express serious concerns about the nation's progress in improving the human rights of Indigenous.

The PIAC releases *Restoring Identity* - the follow up report to the Moving Forward Conference. The report presents a proposal for a reparations tribunal.

The National Library of Australia Oral History Project is published, *Many Voices: Reflections on Experience of Indigenous Child Separation*.

Valerie Linow is awarded compensation by the NSW Victims Compensation Tribunal. This marks the first time a member of the Stolen Generations is compensated for the harm suffered while under the care of the state. She suffered harm as a result of sexual assaults which occurred while she was a 14 year old domestic worker on a rural property where she was placed by the Aborigines Welfare Board.

2003 The Ministerial Council for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (MCATSIA) commissions and releases an independent evaluation of government and non-government responses to the *Bringing them home* report. This gives effect to one of the recommendations of the 2001 Senate Inquiry Report, *Healing: a Legacy of Generations*.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner publicly criticises the failure of governments to provide reparations for members of the Stolen Generation, a national apology, or the appropriate mechanisms for individuals that were forcibly removed to reconnect with their culture.

The Victorian Stolen Generations Taskforce delivers its report to the State Government. The Victorian State Government commissioned the report in response to the *Bringing them home* report, in order to address the hurt and suffering caused by the forcible removal of Indigenous children from their families.

2004 The Commonwealth Government unveils a memorial to the 'Stolen Generations' at Reconciliation Place in Canberra.

461 'Sorry Books' recording the thoughts of Australians on the unfolding history of the Stolen Generations are inscribed on the Australian Memory of the World Register, part of UNESCO's program to protect and promote documentary material with significant international historical value.

2005 The organisation 'Stolen Generations Victoria' is set up as a result of the 2003 report of the Stolen Generations Taskforce. Its purpose is to establish a range of support and referral services that will assist Stolen Generation members to reconnect with their family, community, culture and land.

The National Sorry Day Committee announces that in 2005, Sorry Day will be a 'National Day of Healing for All Australians' in an attempt to better engage the non-Indigenous Australian community with the plight of the 'Stolen Generations'.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) is abolished by the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Amendment Act 2005* (Cth).

The first official Sorry Day ceremony outside Australia is hosted in Lincoln Fields, London, on 25 May 2005.

The Western Australian Child Health Survey is released. The report states that 12.3% of the carers of Indigenous children aged 0-17 in Western Australia were forcibly removed from their families. Compared with other Indigenous children, the children of members of the Stolen Generations are twice as likely to have emotional and behavioural problems, to be at high risk for hyperactivity, emotional and conduct disorders, and twice as likely to abuse alcohol and drugs.

The United Nations Commission on Human Rights passes Resolution 2005 / 35 that adopts the Van Boven / Bassiouni Principles. These principles declare a right to a remedy and reparations for victims of gross violations of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law.



'Culture Shock', Lawry Love, 2001.

2006 *Bennell v State of Western Australia [2006]* is handed down by the Supreme court of Western Australia. Justice Wilcox decided in favour of the Noongar people, recognising their native title rights to land including the Perth metropolitan area and coastal towns such as Bunbury, Margaret River and Albany.

THE NOONGAR NATIVE TITLE CLAIM

In early October 2005, I commenced hearing evidence concerning a native title claim that had been lodged with the Federal Court by 99 named applicants, acting on behalf of a group of people whom they described as “the Noongar People”.

The claim related to an area of land in the southern part of Western Australia. The northernmost point of the claim area, on the Indian Ocean coast, was just north of Jurien Bay, about two-thirds of the way from Perth to Geraldton. The northern boundary of the claim area then extended easterly, north of Moora, before bearing south-easterly to meet the Southern Ocean slightly west of Esperance. This is a vast area of land, taking in the Perth metropolitan area as well as major coastal towns, such as Bunbury, Mandurah, Margaret River and Albany, and many towns in the wheat-belt.

It was apparent that much of the land in the claim area would be freehold or held under a lease that had extinguished any native title. If the claimants were able to demonstrate the necessary connection with the claim area, there would need to be detailed discussions, or a further hearing, about the particular parcels of land that were still subject to native title. However, all parties agreed this should be left for another day; the immediate task was to determine whether there was any subsisting native title at all.

In order to make good a native title claim, it is necessary for the claimants to establish:

- (1) the identity of the indigenous group under whose laws and customs land rights were regulated at the date of European settlement; in this case, 1829;
- (2) that this group has since continued to exist, and continued to observe its laws and customs relating to land, subject only to any variations that have been forced upon it by later circumstances including, particularly, white settlement; and
- (3) that the instant claim is made on behalf of the members of that group or an identifiable part of it.

The applicants’ case was that, in 1829, a society of people, now known as “the Noongar People,” occupied the whole of the claim area; they had a complex of laws and customs, relatively homogenous throughout the whole area, that governed land rights. Under these laws and customs, each person had primary rights over the relatively small area of land upon which he or she usually resided, in an extended-family unit, and for which the unit’s members had management responsibilities. They “spoke” for that country. People also had secondary rights over a larger area of land, the primary rights to which were held by others. People were free to access their secondary country, but were not entitled to “speak” for it. If people wished to visit country to which they did not have either primary or secondary rights, they needed the permission of the right holders.

The applicants' case was that the Noongar People continued to exist as a society, although in a changed form, and to apply, as between themselves, the traditional landholding rules.

The Western Australian and Commonwealth Governments both contested the claim. They said the relevant group, at date of settlement, was not constituted by all the people who resided in the claim area in 1829 but that land in this area was then held under the laws and customs of much smaller, "clan" groups; so any native title claim had to be brought in their name, and on their behalf. The two governments disputed that there was ever an Aboriginal society that extended over the whole claim area and said, alternatively, that, if there ever had been, it no longer existed.

I heard evidence over 20 days. Written and oral evidence was given by expert witnesses, (two historians and two anthropologists, one of each being called to give evidence by counsel for the applicants and the other by counsel for the State, and a linguist called by counsel for the applicants) and by 30 Aboriginal people. The Aboriginal evidence was given over 11 days, all "on country", under canvass in a makeshift courtroom that was moved from one location to another within the claim area.

Counsel also tendered many documents. These included the writings of several Europeans who were either stationed, during the period 1826-1829, at the garrison at King George's Sound (modern Albany) that preceded the Swan River settlement or were early settlers in the Perth area. Each of these writers attained some knowledge of the local Aborigines, and their laws and customs, and, in some cases, became fluent in their language. These writings, combined with the linguist's expert evidence, established that, in 1829, there was a common language throughout the claim area, albeit with dialectic differences. This finding, supplemented by evidence of the degree of contact between the Aboriginal people in different parts of the claim area and the similarity of their laws and customs, led me to conclude that, in 1829, there was a single society that occupied the whole of the claim area and whose laws and customs regulated land rights.

The more difficult problem was the effect of European settlement on this society. The evidence about this was graphic.

The first European settlement, as distinct from the garrison, was in the fertile Swan Valley. This area had previously been home to many Aboriginal people, no doubt because it sustained abundant food sources. However, the early white settlers fenced off their land grants and drove out the wildlife. The Aborigines, deprived of a principal food source, responded by taking the settlers' stock for food. This led to reprisals. Many Aborigines were shot for stealing. Within a few years, the Swan Valley lost most of its Indigenous population. As settlement expanded, so did the area from which Aborigines were excluded, at least in the sense of being able to maintain their traditional lifestyle. The Aboriginal people either moved further out, into unsettled areas that were the "country" of other Noongar people, according to their traditional laws, or took employment, as stockmen or domestic servants, with the European settlers; in the process, family members were often separated. People from different areas were often congregated together in missions or on Aboriginal reserves. The effect was to weaken peoples' links with their country.

Most of the Aboriginal witnesses gave detailed evidence about their descent, usually extending back four or five generations. Every one of these witnesses mentioned at least one white male ancestor. It appears that, when the British Government decided to transport convicts to Western Australia, and in contrast to its policy in respect of earlier transportation to the eastern colonies, it paid little attention to the need to maintain a convict gender balance. The result was a substantial excess, in Western Australia, of males over females. Predictably, many white males formed relationships with black women. Although it seems many of these relationships were loving, long-term relationships, they had two far-reaching effects.

First, the traditional rule, throughout most of the claim area, was that children took their rights to country through their fathers. If the father was white, he had no country to pass on. But connection to country is fundamental to Aboriginal life and culture. So, rather than have children lose any connection to country, the Noongar people accepted inheritance through the mother. This modification of the traditional rule was relied on by the two governments, in the Noongar case, in arguing that the present body of rules was not the body of laws and customs operative in 1829.

Second, over a period of about 50 years, there was an official policy in Western Australia (in common with most other parts of Australia) of removing “mixed blood” children from their families. Because of the high proportion of Noongar children who had at least one white male ancestor, almost all of them were targets for removal. Many were in fact removed, most notoriously to the Moore River camp that was depicted in the film ‘Rabbit-proof Fence’. Many of the witnesses before me had themselves been removed from their families or told of parents or siblings who had been removed. Sometimes removed children were eventually reunited with their families; often they were not. In terms of community cohesiveness, the consequences of the removal policy were profound.

After completion of the evidence, counsel prepared and submitted to me written submissions dealing with every aspect of the case. I eventually reached the conclusion, contrary to my original expectation, that the applicants had proved the survival of the Noongar society from 1829 until the present time. The basis of my conclusion was compelling evidence about five matters: the continuing use of the Noongar language by many people throughout the claim area; the adherence by all the witnesses to a complex of spiritual beliefs that accorded broadly with the beliefs noted by the early European writers and were widespread in the claim area; the maintenance of traditional hunting practices, even where this was not necessary for food-gathering purposes; the continuing coming-together of people for festivals, funerals etc; and, most importantly, the continued adherence, by many people, to the traditional rule about seeking permission to visit someone else’s country.

I handed down reasons for judgment to a packed court, in Perth, in September 2006. The reasons were lengthy, so I merely made a statement about the history of the case, the main issues and the result. When it became clear to the audience that I accepted the claim that the Noongar society, and Noongar culture, had survived, there was an audible, collective intake of breath and widespread emotion.

The evening television news services featured celebrations involving many hundreds of people. A few days later, after I had returned to Sydney, my Associate took a telephone call from a woman who identified herself as Noongar. She said she practised as a psychologist and had many Noongar patients. She asked my Associate to tell me my finding had given the Noongar people a psychological lift like none she had seen before. The message tended to conform a feeling I had gradually developed over my long exposure to native title litigation: the most important result of success in a native title case is not in relation to permissible uses of the subject land, but the communal recognition and affirmation it provides.

My finding is the subject of an appeal, probably the main issue being whether the modifications to the traditional laws and customs that have occurred since 1829 — in my view, as responses to the effects of white settlement — mean that the rules now observed cannot be said to be the laws and customs in force in 1829. Whatever the final outcome of the case, it will not take from me the memory of the Noongar reaction to my decision.

- **Murray Wilcox QC**, former judge of the Federal Court of Australia.



2006 The first Stolen Generations compensation scheme in Australia is set up in Tasmania by the *Stolen Generations of Aboriginal Children Act 2006* (Tas).

First payout deal for stolen children

The Australian, Matthew Denholm,
18 October, 2006

The national debate on the "stolen generations" will be reignited today by the unveiling of the nation's first compensation package for Aborigines taken from their parents under assimilation policies.

Tasmania will today announce a government apology and a \$4 million compensation scheme for members of the stolen generations. The Australian understands the scheme will involve the appointment of an independent assessor, who will judge individual cases against set criteria.

The assessor will consider individuals' testimonies and examine government records to test claims of wrongful removal by welfare agencies, mostly from the 1930s to the 1950s.

A compensation funding pool - to be capped at about \$4million - will then be distributed among those found to have genuine cases. While the number of potential applicants is unknown, the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre has already identified 40 individuals with "solid claims" for compensation. The scheme - hailed by Aboriginal leaders yesterday as a model for other states to follow - will be advertised nationally to invite applications from those who may have left the state.

Premier Paul Lennon will sell the package as lifting a key barrier to reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Tasmanians. Yesterday, Aboriginal leaders praised Mr Lennon's "leadership" and "courage" and expressed hope it would rekindle national debate on the issue.

It is nine years since the release of the Bringing Them Home royal commission report into indigenous children removed from their families. TAC legal adviser Michael Mansell said he hoped other states would examine and adopt the model and that the Prime Minister would reconsider his opposition to an apology for the stolen generations. "This is a very groundbreaking decision and not just the other states but John Howard also should ... take a very close look," he said.

Official reasons for the removal of Aboriginal children to institutions or foster homes included maternal "neglect" or "waywardness". However, many Aborigines believe these were often groundless excuses to suit a policy of assimilating black children into white foster families wherever possible.

Some claimants told The Australian the scheme would allow them to "begin to forgive". Eddie Thomas, 70, believed to be the oldest surviving member of the stolen generations in Tasmania, was taken from his grandmother when he was six months old. He and his brother and sister had been placed in

her care when his mother died after his birth on Cape Barren Island, northeast Tasmania, in 1936.

He believed his grandmother was duped into signing a consent form. "She couldn't read or write, so she couldn't have been in agreement," he said. His life with white foster families on mainland Tasmania was unhappy and his grandmother was prevented from visiting the children, he said.

"There used to be this old lady come to the gate and our foster mother would say, 'That's just a silly old black woman', and take us inside," he said. "It wasn't until I was old enough to go to work that I met up with an uncle who told me that was my grandmother. She wanted to talk to us, to cuddle us, but she wasn't allowed. She died of a broken heart.

"I've felt for a large part of my life so much anger, but this (an apology and compensation) will allow me to move forward and to forgive those people." Heather Brown, 63, broke down as she recalled the day she and six other children were taken from her family home.

"Those people just came through our home and got me -- I ran, there were children running everywhere," she said. "It happened all at once. I was dazed. I didn't talk for months afterwards."

She still does not know why she was taken from her parents at Wiltshire Junction, northwest Tasmania, or why she was not allowed to see them or her siblings while she grew up in a succession of foster families. "I'll never forget," she said.

Annette Peardon, 57, said she and two siblings were taken from their mother on Flinders Island, because of maternal "neglect". She disputes this, remembering a clean home with sufficient food.

The childhood that followed was marked by "physical, emotional and sexual" abuse at institutions and foster homes, she said. While she found her mother after turning 21, her sister and brother were never reunited with her.

"It broke her spirit -- she had three children taken away and only one went back," Ms Peardon said.

Many of those affected have since died, but the TAC has identified 27 individuals it believes have an "extremely strong" case for compensation.

The scheme fulfils a commitment first made by Mr Lennon in The Australian two years ago and repeated at the March state election this year.



"After all these years of struggle a breakthrough finally came. Our long time Tasmanian Aboriginal lawyer and Activist Michael Mansell who has worked so very hard for us, phoned up and told me that Annette Peardon and myself were to attend a function for the history-making handing down of the Landmark Draft Bill for the Stolen Generation to make an Apology and to compensate them... this happened on October 18th, 2006. This was to be the beginning of history being made... eventually a date had been set to attend Parliament, it was a full sitting of the Lower House.

This was history making, never before in Tasmania had members of the public been invited to the floor of the Chamber to speak while Parliament was in progress.

While we were waiting to be taken into Parliament by the Sheriff... I felt very nervous this was a very important occasion. But the time came to enter the House, I was to speak first, I was introduced to the Speaker, who in turn introduced me to the Members, I was now at the lectern and microphone and I felt so proud and for some reason I was no longer nervous. I looked around addressed the Speaker, the Leaders of each political party, after doing this I was on my way... the words spilled from my mouth.

How being stolen from my family under the Assimilation act, the denial of my Aboriginality, the loss of my family, community and culture.

On top of this I spent twenty years in a cruel institution, being a slave to others. By the time I had made my address (I really spoke for all members of the Stolen Generation) I don't think there was a dry eye in the House, both men and women, I know they felt very much for us. History was made again when the Compensation Package was passed through the House unanimously.

But still there were a lot of butterflies, because we now had to get it through the Upper house and everybody knew it was going to be touch and go. We were present in this sitting... [and it was] a nervous wait.

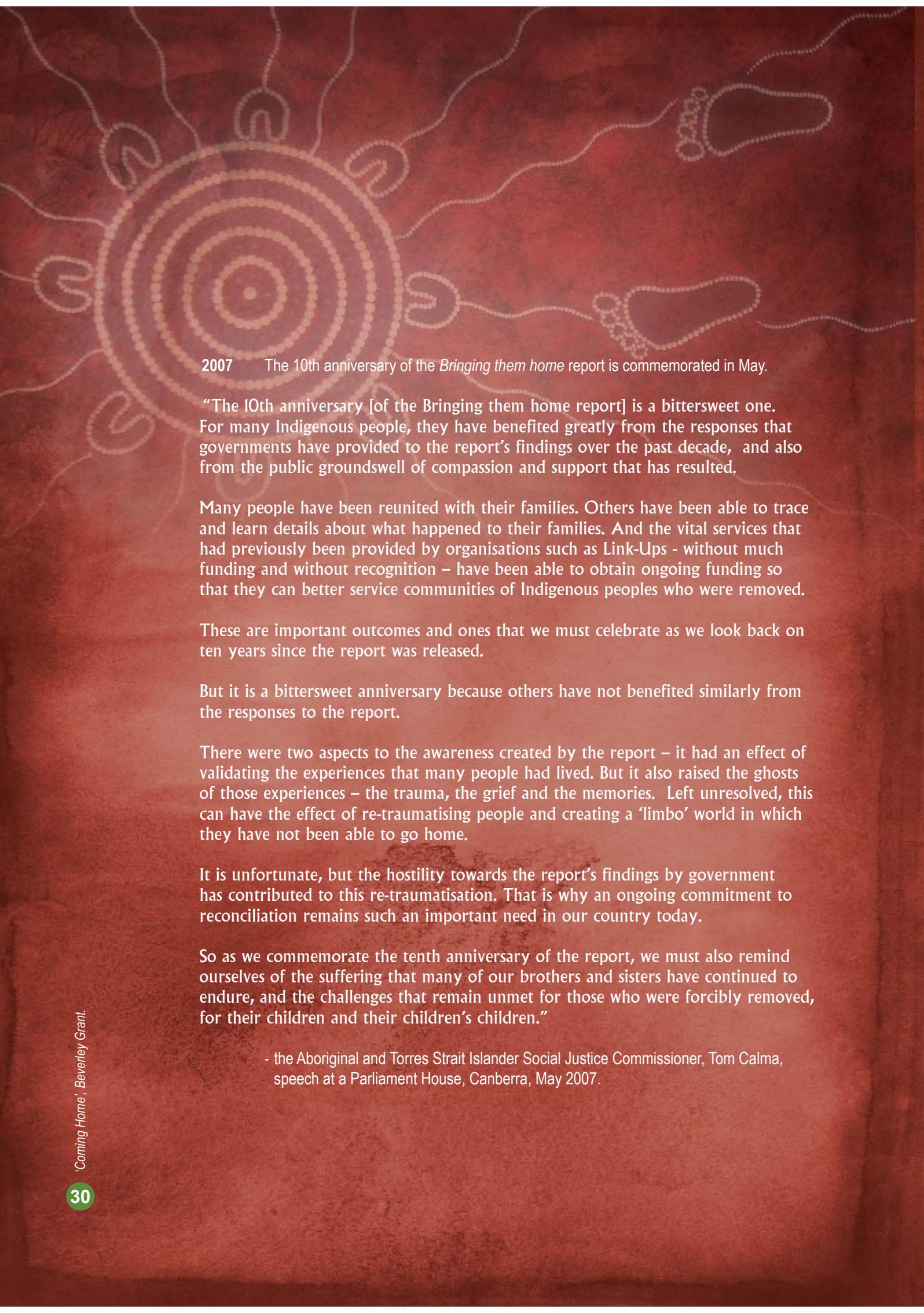
This was on the 28th November 2006 and there was quite a lot of discussion... but after the third reading the Compensation Package was passed. What a joyful and emotional time this was as we came out of Parliament House, news travels fast because there were cameras everywhere and a large crowd of our people to cheer us. I was fortunate enough to be one of the first to congratulate our Premier Paul Lennon, because I knew what a huge effort he had put in for us.

I must say that it has been a long road to this victory, but it has helped a lot of people to come to terms with life, it has given them justice and something to build a new life around. Money cannot erase all the sadness, but it will help us to now enjoy our lives and to help our families.

– Eddie Thomas



'Sewing Class', Mapoon Mission, 1960.
Photograph reproduced courtesy of the State Library of Queensland and the community at Old Mapoon.



2007 The 10th anniversary of the *Bringing them home* report is commemorated in May.

“The 10th anniversary [of the *Bringing them home* report] is a bittersweet one. For many Indigenous people, they have benefited greatly from the responses that governments have provided to the report’s findings over the past decade, and also from the public groundswell of compassion and support that has resulted.

Many people have been reunited with their families. Others have been able to trace and learn details about what happened to their families. And the vital services that had previously been provided by organisations such as Link-Ups - without much funding and without recognition – have been able to obtain ongoing funding so that they can better service communities of Indigenous peoples who were removed.

These are important outcomes and ones that we must celebrate as we look back on ten years since the report was released.

But it is a bittersweet anniversary because others have not benefited similarly from the responses to the report.

There were two aspects to the awareness created by the report – it had an effect of validating the experiences that many people had lived. But it also raised the ghosts of those experiences – the trauma, the grief and the memories. Left unresolved, this can have the effect of re-traumatising people and creating a ‘limbo’ world in which they have not been able to go home.

It is unfortunate, but the hostility towards the report’s findings by government has contributed to this re-traumatisation. That is why an ongoing commitment to reconciliation remains such an important need in our country today.

So as we commemorate the tenth anniversary of the report, we must also remind ourselves of the suffering that many of our brothers and sisters have continued to endure, and the challenges that remain unmet for those who were forcibly removed, for their children and their children’s children.”

- the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Tom Calma, speech at a Parliament House, Canberra, May 2007.

2007 ***Trevorrow v State of South Australia (2007)***

Reflections on the case, Joanna Richardson, solicitor for the plaintiff.

On 1 August 2007, His Honour Justice Gray handed down his decision in the matter of *Trevorrow v State of South Australia*. It was the moment that Bruce Trevorrow and his legal team had been working towards for 13 years. Despite being unwell, Bruce had travelled from Bairnsdale on the east coast of Victoria, to Adelaide to hear the decision. I had arranged to meet Bruce and his family beforehand. We were all very nervous. We reminded each other that whatever the outcome we had put the best case we could, and we now knew the answer to the questions that Bruce asked when we first met at Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement (ALRM) in March 1994: Why had he been removed from his family when he was little? Why did he find life so difficult?

After meeting Bruce I began to seek and obtain government documents that recorded what had happened to him. At first we were given only a small part of his personal file. These documents included a report from the local police officer to the Aborigines Protection Board which recorded that on Christmas Day 1957 Bruce had been unwell and his father had insisted that he be taken to hospital. From there he was placed with a white foster family, but at this point we had no idea why. There was a letter from Bruce's mother, Mrs Thora Karpany, to the Secretary of the Aborigines Protection Board dated 25 July 1958, asking about her son, asking how long before she could have him home, telling the Welfare Officer she had not forgotten she has a baby son. The Secretary replied on 19 August 1958, telling Mrs Karpany that as yet the doctor did not consider Bruce fit to go home. Later, I found hospital records that demonstrated that Bruce had quickly recovered from his illness and, contrary to the Secretary's letter, it seemed he was not under the care of a doctor in August 1958.

After I was granted access to the files held at State Archives, I also obtained correspondence and policy documents of the Aborigines Protection Board, the Secretary of the Board and the Aborigines Department. Included in that material were the opinions of Crown Solicitors, documents which recorded the inability of the Children's Welfare and Public Relief Board and Aborigines Protection Board to reach agreement about the treatment of Aboriginal children and frank admissions by the Secretary of the Aborigines Protection Board to his counterpart in Victoria that, without lawful authority, many children were being placed in institutions and with white foster families. He estimated that in 1958 there were approximately 300 children who had been placed in this manner.

In 1998 we issued proceedings against the State of South Australia. We argued that the State did not have the power to remove him from his family in the way they had, i.e. the State had acted unlawfully or beyond its powers; that Bruce had been falsely imprisoned and that the State knew they acted unlawfully when they removed him. We also argued that the State had owed Bruce fiduciary and common law duties of care. For example, as the Aborigines Protection Board was his "legal guardian" they were obliged to protect him and, because they knew he had been unlawfully removed from his parents, they were obliged to make sure he got independent legal advice about what had happened to him.

Also, the Board had to make sure they were very careful about removing babies, they had to make sure there was a good reason why a baby should be taken away, that the foster placement was good and healthy, and then when the child was returned to the parents, they had to make sure that was done in a safe way. We said the State had not done those things properly and had therefore breached those duties of care.

We said Bruce had suffered permanent injury and loss, including loss of culture, as a result of his removal, his placement and in the manner of his return to his family. As a result of this treatment Bruce sought declarations and damages, including exemplary and aggravated damages which are sought when the defendant has acted in complete disregard of a person's rights or in an especially malicious or fraudulent way.

The State vigorously defended the claim. It denied Bruce had been unlawfully removed and denied it was liable for the actions of the Aborigines Protection Board. It argued that, as a result of the passage of time, it would suffer prejudice if the claim were permitted to proceed.

For the next seven years the action ground through numerous preliminary stages. Background events also made our preparations very difficult. Bruce suffers from ill health, and the lengthy process took its toll on him and on his family. The passage of time made it impossible to keep together a core legal team. I was the only lawyer who remained acting throughout that time. Many people have made important contributions to the presentation of the case: Robyn Layton QC, who acted as senior counsel until the end of 2005; Gordon Barrett QC and Sydney Tilmouth QC; Andrew Collett and Nigel Wilson, junior counsel who assisted in the preparations; and Julian Burnside QC and Claire O'Connor both of whom accepted the brief only weeks before the trial began and who must have blanched when we began to inundate them with volume after volume of pleadings, materials and reports, and whose advice and skills proved critical. Then there are the researchers, some of whom started as volunteers and who worked on the case at various times: Graham Hyde, Andrew Alston, Christopher Holland, Dr Irene Watson; George Lesses, Christopher Johnston and most importantly, Andrew Nettlefold.

Other legal processes also had an effect. The Joy Williams claim in NSW was unsuccessful, and we saw the toll that action had on Mrs Williams. In the Northern Territory claims were brought against the Commonwealth on the part of Mrs Cubillo and Mr Gunner. Although those claims were unsuccessful I remember reading the judgements and realising that the facts of Bruce's case and the laws in South Australia at the time he was removed meant that those decisions did not deal a fatal blow to his claim, in fact the decisions strengthened his claim. At the same time, important cases about the extent of the liability of statutory authorities (which broadly means the responsibility of government to the people they look after) were being decided in Australia and in the United Kingdom.

In March 2005 the claim was given trial dates in November 2005. The trial lasted for 37 days, spread between November 2005 and April 2006. In the course of the trial 173 exhibits were filed, expert evidence was heard about the plaintiff and his health, about the knowledge in the late 1950's of the harmful effects of the separation of a child from their family, and evidence was taken from, amongst others, Bruce and his family, from his foster sister and officers of the Aborigines Department.

Finally, on 1 August 2007, Justice Gray delivered his decision. He found for Bruce, he rejected the State's defence.

At the time of preparing this article we do not know if the decision will be the subject of an appeal to the Full Court of the Supreme Court of South Australia. Although the Premier, Mr Rann, has announced that the State would pay Bruce the compensation he has been awarded, the State has nevertheless reserved its right to appeal the decision.

So, at this time, what does the success of this case mean for others? It recognises that in South Australia, the State through the Aborigines Protection Board, the Children's Welfare and Public Relief Board and the Aborigines Department, engaged in a practice whereby Aboriginal children were removed from their families despite the fact that it was known there was no legal authority or power to do that. In 1958 the Secretary of the Aborigines Protection Board estimated that approximately 300 children had been dealt with in this way. It was done despite the fact that they knew such removals carried risk of harm to children. And, as was demonstrated in Bruce's case, even when there was sufficient material to demonstrate the child was not, in fact, neglected, the child was not returned to the care of his family. Instead, accurate information about the child was withheld, his parents were misinformed and their attempts to have their child returned to their care thwarted.

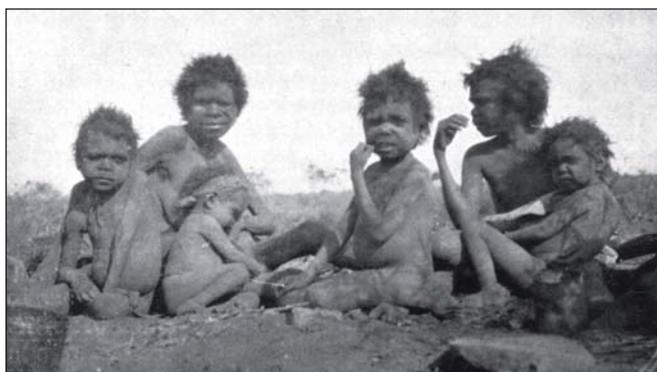
It also has broader implications across Australia. The decision is authority for the proposition that by the mid- 1950's it was reasonably foreseeable that the separation of infant Aboriginal children from their families and placement in long term non- Indigenous foster care created real risks for the health of those children. Officers of the State working in this area foresaw those risks, or ought to have foreseen those risks. One of the consequences of the foreseeability of this risk of harm is that the State then owed duties of care to the children in the manner of their removal, their placement and their return to family. The State can be held liable where it is demonstrated that the duties of care have been breached and the child has suffered injury and loss as a result of the breach.

What can we learn from the conduct of this case? It has confirmed what we already knew, that litigation is costly in terms of time, money and emotion. As was recommended ten years ago in the Bringing them home report, litigation should not be the method by which other Aboriginal people who have suffered from similar actions, whether by reason of their removal, placement or return to family, and there are others, should be forced to seek redress.

For a more comprehensive explanation of the case and a summary of Justice Gray's findings by Joanna Richardson, visit our website www.humanrights.gov.au/bth

" I don't recall what I'd done exactly, but I was locked up underground in the dungeon. It was a creepy place to be and the imagination, born from the stories the girls would tell, would run rampant in my mind. Time turned over every so slowly in the dungeon... what I do remember from three weeks in segregation is that I had bruises from a bashing. I can't remember why or who had done it, but I knew I was being kept there until those bruises faded... I was sweeping what we called the cubaway (or covered way) when a screw called me into his office. Now, that fat man started to punch and slap me about and he landed a couple of punches into my stomach. I guess he was dreaming about being a boxer and was looking for a bit of practice on someone who couldn't, rather wouldn't dare hit back, such as a small girl like myself. I don't rightly remember what it was all about, but I do remember walking out of that office to a group of girls, who were standing by worried about me, with a smile on my face and told them it didn't hurt. Well, the screw heard me and called me back to the office... I reckon it was then he shoved me down the stairs to be locked away in the dungeon. The screws loved to push me down those steep narrow dungeon steps. They wanted me to take a fall, but I don't think I ever did."

- Jeannie Hayes



2007 *Roach v AEC and Commonwealth of Australia* [2007]

Vickie Lee Roach, an Aboriginal woman from Wiradjuri country in NSW, serving time in Victoria's Dame Phyllis Frost Women's prison, wins a High Court challenge. She and the Human Rights Law Resource Centre in Victoria successfully overturn legislation which banned prisoners serving a sentence of three years or less from voting at elections. The High Court held the legislation was unconstitutional.

“This year marks 10 years since the *Bringing them home* report. Out of the seven siblings that were taken away from my mother four of us were not return to my mother's care, after the death of my brother I was sent home but ran away after my mother started drinking again. My other brother and sister have never been returned to my mother, they are adults now and have families of their own- I was hoping that during the 10 years I would had made some contact with my siblings but this has not happened. With the help of Bondi Mayor, who has offered a space at Bondi for a Stolen Generation Memorial wall, my brothers and sister will be remembered in 2008 on 26th May, National Sorry Day. This has been my dream ever since my brother was killed. Not only will he be remembered, but for all my Aboriginal brothers and sisters who were never brought home.”

- Mary Hooker



'Girls living under the stone age system' and 'Native girls living under civilised conditions',
Photographs of Australian Aborigines, Australian Aborigines Friends' Association, 1936.
Photograph courtesy of Ivan Copely.

Mary's will to survive

By Ellen McIntosh, The Penrith Press, March 13, 2007

TORN from her family at eight, abused by supposed protectors, labelled a delinquent and "borderline retarded" - it could have been easy for Mary to yield to the stereotype. But she has spent a lifetime fighting to prove the system wrong and seeking justice for herself and other members of the "stolen generation" of Aboriginal children.

Mary, 49, of Kingswood Park, has told her story publicly over the internet and for the Warsaw Museum. She also testified at the Parliament inquiry into the "stolen generation", which adopted just one of the 54 recommendations from the Bring Them Home report - to encourage Aboriginal people affected by the forcible removal policies to tell their stories.

Mary said her Department of Community Services file stated her IQ was "borderline retarded", but at age 40 she enrolled in university. She now has childcare qualifications, nursing training and last year graduated from Bible college, qualified for the Indigenous ministry.

She has been married for 22 years and has two adult children and two grandchildren. "I didn't want to be like my brothers and sisters, using [the abuse] as an excuse and a crutch," Mary said. "I was determined to fight the system and prove that I wasn't useless."

One of Mary's most rewarding achievements will be the unveiling of a memorial at Bondi on May 26, the 10th anniversary of national Sorry Day.

It will mark the death of her younger brother Tommy and other Aboriginal children who have died in care.

Mary said Tommy died in 1975 after falling from a train during a trip home to Taree for holidays. He and four other state wards were insufficiently unsupervised, she said.

Mary was eight when she was removed from her parents and the Aboriginal reserve on which they lived near Taree. She said eight of her 10 siblings were removed during

the years, separated and trained to be housekeepers and nursemaids to white people.

Mary was sent to Mittagong but ran away, classified a delinquent and sent to Parramatta Girls Home. She said unruly girls were taken to "the dungeon", blocked off tunnels leading to the neighbouring psychiatric centre.

"That's when the men would come to bash us and rape us," Mary said. "We were told not to tell anybody because nobody would believe us and that they were our parents and they could do anything they liked to us."

In 2004 Mary saw "the dungeon" again at a reunion and the memories flooded back. She said one by one, scores of other women admitted they too had been abused there. Mary said she was next sent to be a governess at Vaucluse, and then to Reiby Training School at Campbelltown after she ran away again.

Meanwhile, the abuse continued, she said. "When I was 18, I was given a letter by the department and told I was no longer a ward of the state. That was it."

Mary continues to fight to have the offenders charged by police: "They need to be accountable to me: I want to know why. "I was taken off my parents for neglect, but they did far worse - my parents never bashed or raped me." Mary said she was also suing the Department of Community Services, although a department spokeswoman said she had not served any court proceedings on the department.

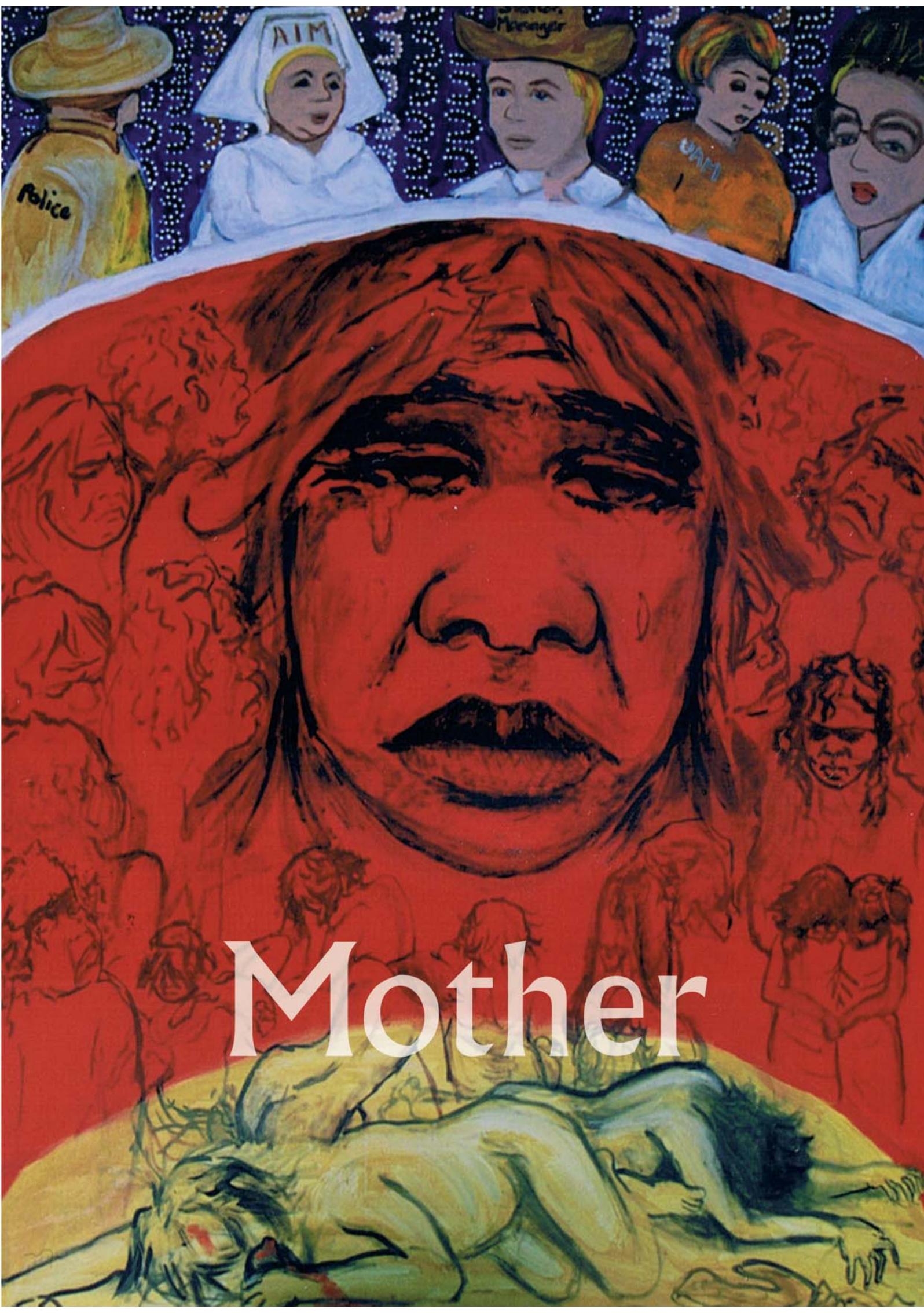
She had made some claims against the department "which, on the basis of the information supplied, cannot be substantiated". While Community Services Minister Kay Patterson officially apologised to Aboriginal people in June 2005, "no information has been supplied by [Mary] that would establish that she is a member of the 'stolen generation' or that this is the basis of any claims", the spokeswoman said.

Article reproduced courtesy of the Penrith Press (www.penrithpress.com.au).

Women's Lament , Kunyi McInerney, 1999

This painting is our Oodnadatta History. The people on the top row are the police, Australian Inland Mission nurse at the Oodnadatta clinic/ Hospital, the station manager, the United Aboriginal Mission missionary, and the social worker. All these people are responsible for removing the children from the families and their culture and area.

The red sand is the sand hills shaped like a large a football oval and in the centre is the clay pan where we used to have the school sports day. The people told us when the wind gets inside this large oval it makes a wailing noise and they say that noise is the families especially the mothers crying for their children who were taken away. The mothers and grandmothers were so frustrated and desperate that they would strip their clothes off and cut themselves with sharp rocks, and fall down wailing for their children- some never to be seen again. This large painting was used on the stage when the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioner came to Adelaide.



Mother



I spoke to my mother for the first time when I was 27 years old... The time was 11.37pm on Friday the 15th of September 1978. I had just arrived in Tennant Creek from Sydney where I'd lived and worked for the previous twenty seven years.

I pushed open the tired wrought iron gate of the house and walked in darkness along the concrete path. As I did, the front door opened and a young boy and girl ran out of the house yelling "Dougie!". Who the hell is Dougie? My name is John! Did I just travel two thousand kilometres to the wrong address?

Before I could turn around and walk back out the gate a young woman was walking down the path towards me. She peeled the two young ones off my arms and left leg and took my hand as she said, "Mum's been waiting forever to see you". My eyes followed the path in front of me to where I saw the silhouette of a woman standing in the half light of the open door. Her hands were clasped together in front of her body and she stood perfectly still. Even in the darkness, I could see tears rolling down her chubby cheeks. She held out her arms to embrace me and I walked into them. We held each other for the longest time. I was home.

- John Williams Mozely

"A young woman who was having a relationship with a white man falls pregnant, he dumps her and his offspring. She, poor girl has nothing and very little support from anyone, parents are diabetics. She attends local hospital, baby due New Year's Eve 1965. She is left for 3 days in labour, finally; baby delivered by forceps, bruised black and blue, not breathing. After 20 minutes fed by oxygen he came around. She did not have him for days, he was too injured.

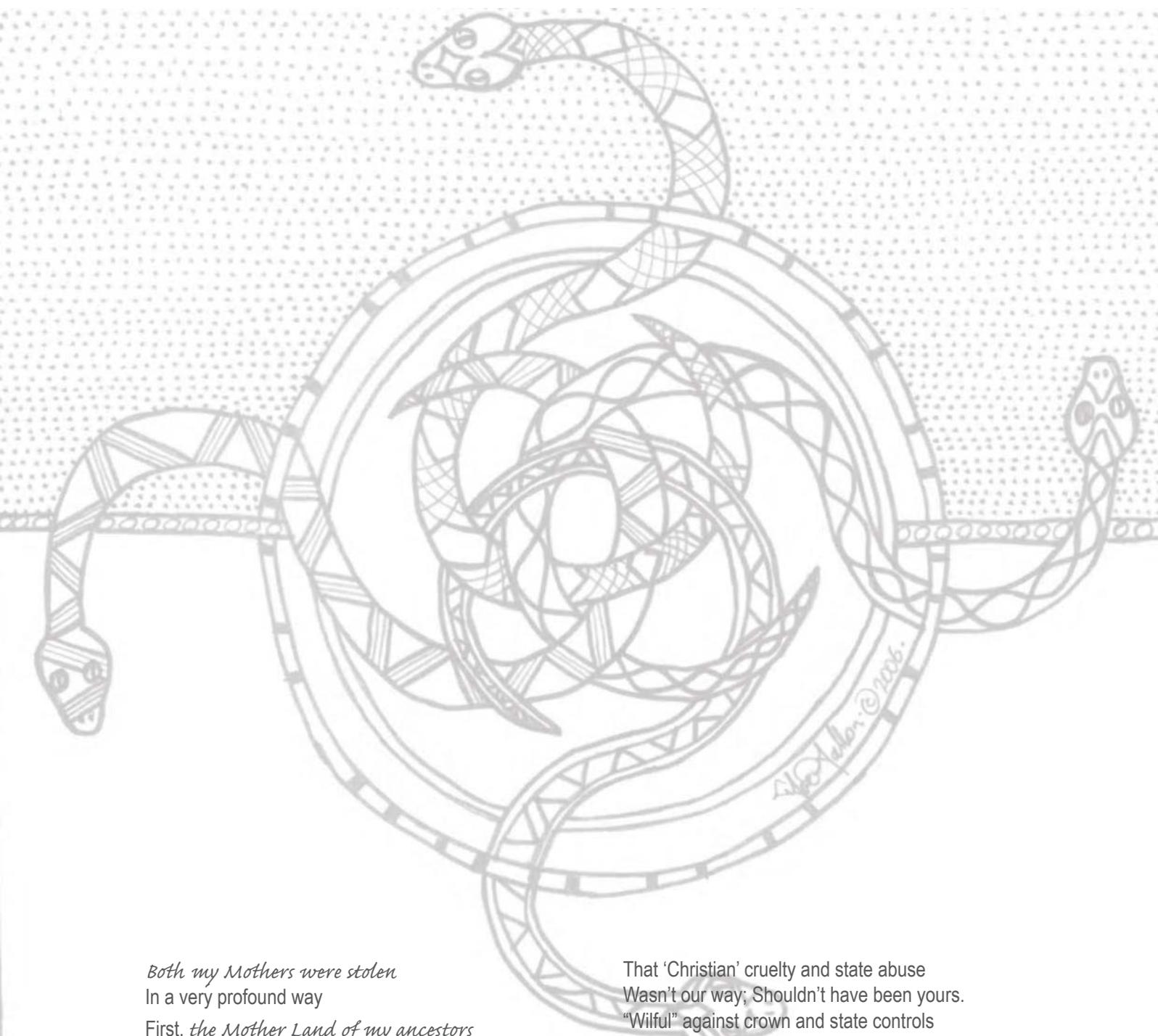
She asked about her baby and was told he was hopelessly crippled plus cerebral damage. She took it, they spoke the truth. She then had a social worker write and ask C.S.V. about her little son 28th March 1965. She was sent a letter dated 22nd March 1965, that Paediatrician at R.C.H. had made him a State Ward. At 10 months he was placed in foster care. The reports on this lady were not very flattering, and on the baby's records it states: find parents for this child.

He stayed in foster care until 21 months, when we came along. We went to see him. My husband squatted down and called the little boy's name. The child had not a thing to play with. All that was in the yard was a pile of blue metal stone. Suddenly the child scooped up a handful of these stones, went over to his soon to be chosen father and placed them in his hand. He had nothing but these stones and he gave them, "I'll be darned we said". With that he had a family."

- Ron and Marie Cox, Jonathan Cox's adoptive parents

"I was adopted six weeks after I was born and believe I was taken by undue pressure because even when my biological mother was passing away she told my sister who was there that there were more and they were not the only ones. She had little yellow tabs in her diary with Link-up phone numbers all over them."

- Christopher Mason



*Both my Mothers were stolen
In a very profound way
First, the Mother Land of my ancestors
Then, my own Mother that fateful day.
The longing was always strong in my heart
Often caused me to flee, "abscond"
I needed to be with the ways of my own
That is where I belong.
The innate knowledge of my ancestors
The land, the loss and, the chains
Could ne'er withhold the spirits strength
Of which, all my life is aimed.
I broke through your incarcerations
The leg ties, barred windows and doors*

That 'Christian' cruelty and state abuse
Wasn't our way; Shouldn't have been yours.
"Wilful" against crown and state controls
Vowing my own all true worth
Fought alongside the rest of us
Whilst you mongrels perfected your worst.
So many were killed or broken
Yet still, many of us survive
And, *we rise the ways of our ancestors
We, the new generations with pride
Claim our own return to this nation
Our heritage, our culture, we stand
And, live within future generations return
Our Mother's spirits to this sacred land.*

Sacred Mothers

- Yveane Fallon

My natural mother was the eldest of six brothers and sisters. She was also the fairest. Her name was Mary Barbara Williams. [Like] so many other Aboriginal kids, her birth was never registered. All that’s known from archival records is that she was born at Alice Springs on or about the 28th of December 1933. Her mother was Ruby Foster and her father was Elias Jack Williams. Jack was a Western Arrernte man and was raised at Hermannsburg, a former Lutheran Church Mission one hundred and forty kilometres west of Alice Springs.

Hermannsburg Mission was established in 1877 in the traditional land of the Western Arrernte. Over time, Luritja and Pintubi people were brought into the Mission as the “civilising” mission spread further and further into the Central Desert area. Hermannsburg was handed back to its traditional owners and custodians by the Church in 1982 and is now called by its Arrernte name, Ntaria.

Jack, as he was called, was the son of Johannes Ntjalka and Maria Kngarra. While Jack claimed Mum as his daughter, he was not her natural father. Her real father was apparently some white fella whose name is not mentioned by the old people at Hermannsburg. This was the way things were! While her brothers and sisters grew up with each other at Hermannsburg, my mother was raised by a Northern Territory policeman at the old Heavy Tree Gap police station in Alice Springs. His name was Bob Hamilton and although he was not my mother’s father, he ‘grew her up’ from when she was a toddler. Bob was a white fella. I would have liked to have met him but he died in 1963, long before I ever knew his name or who he was.

Notwithstanding the fact he was a police officer, old Bob apparently couldn’t stop the police or Native Welfare Board from taking my mother. My mother was thirteen at the time. The year was 1946... Unlike kids taken to the Bungalow, other Aboriginal children from the Northern Territory who were placed in institutions such as Garden Point on Croker Island, St Mary’s Home in Alice Springs, or Groote Eylandt Home had a more than even chance of remaining somewhere within the Territory. This was the case with Mum’s brothers and sisters who were also taken away one by one and placed in various institutions in the Northern Territory. When they were old enough and no longer under the control of the Native Affairs Department, they all managed to return to Hermannsburg to live.

My mother’s ultimate destination, unknown to her at the time, was the Church Mission Society home at Mulgoa near Penrith New South Wales, more than two thousand kilometres by rail from Alice Springs.

After two years in the Church Mission Society home at Mulgoa my mother was deemed sufficiently educated and trained to commence employment as a domestic servant. It was apparently of little concern to the Church Mission Society or government that she was functionally illiterate. She began work at fifteen with Normanhurst Private Hospital in Ashfield. After working here and later, as a domestic on a sheep station near Tamworth my mother sought permission to return to the Northern Territory. After being told she didn’t meet the minimum educational requirements for the Air Force in Alice Springs Mum returned to live in her Mother’s county - Warramungu country – in Tennant Creek. Her journey home had taken her nine years.

- John Williams Mozley



‘A group of Aranda girls’,

Photographs of Australian Aborigines, Australian Aborigines Friends’ Association, 1936.

My story is about a mother and daughter both victims of those nasty folk called the Aborigines Protection Board, (the APB). Lily- born 1910 and her daughter Marjorie, born 1925.

Both were taken from the community. Lily at the age of 14 commenced service to Mrs S. G. W in August, 1921. Lily was found 'un-suitable' and came back to the community in 1922. Three years later, the APB sent Lily to Mrs. A. J. C. In June, 1925 Lily was sent home pregnant, where she gave birth to a baby girl she named Marjorie. Her babe was taken by the APB and placed in the care of Aunt Elizabeth, my grandmother, who raised Marjorie. Lily returned to Mrs C., falls pregnant again and so is returned to family for good in November 1928.

Marjorie was raised by Lily's Aunt Elizabeth until she was eight, at which time the APB inspectors came and took child away to Cootamundra Aborigines girls home. That was the last time Lily saw her daughter. Later, Lily married had other children. Lily later died not knowing where or what was happening to her daughter Marjorie.

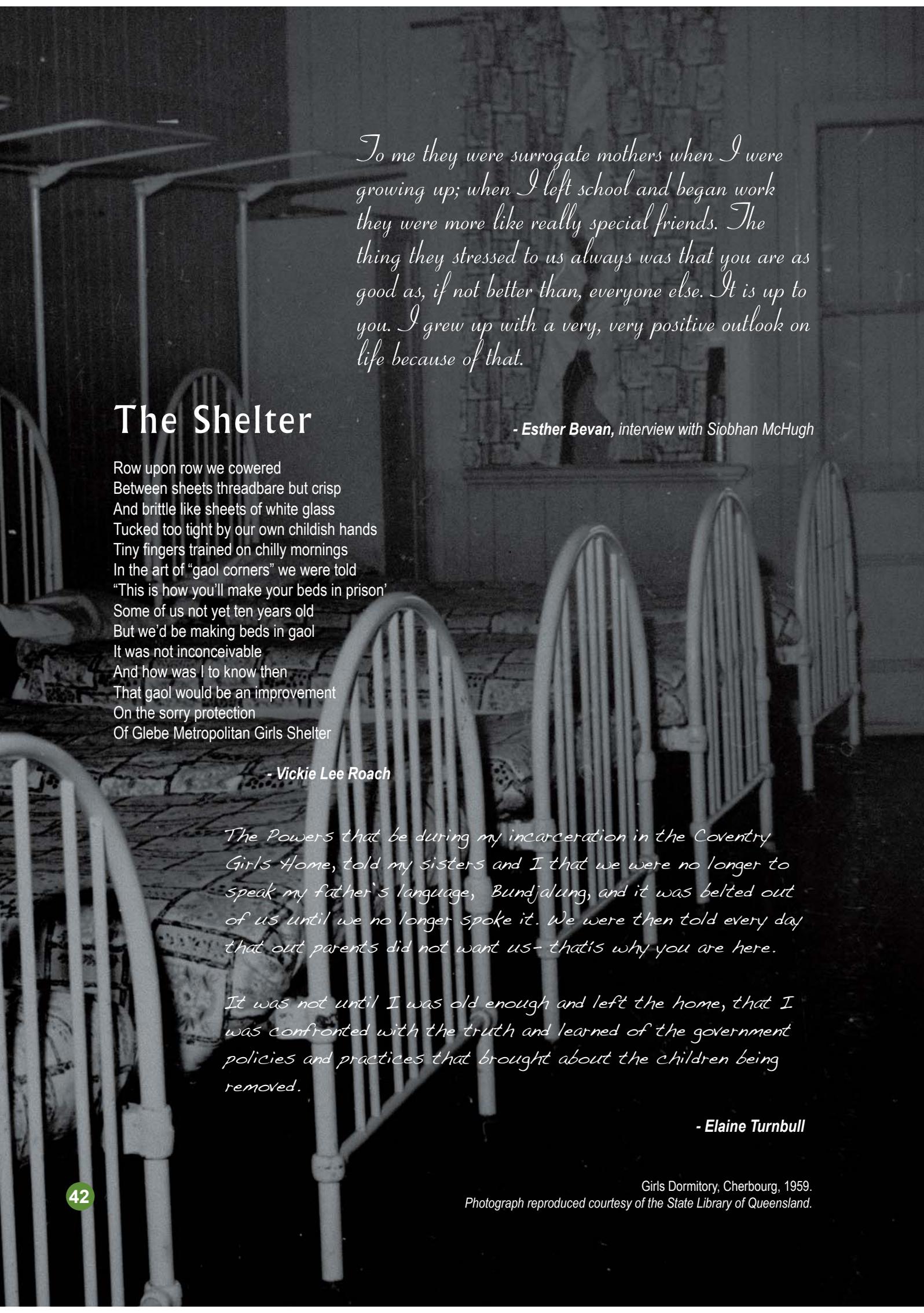
Lily's children searched for many years trying to find their lost sister, no luck because APB records were not available to Aboriginal folk at the time. Then a change came on the scene Marjorie who had married and raised her own family, was finally found by her family after 70 years. A re-union was arranged by her brother and sister, to take their sister back to Karuah Reserve from where she had been taken from all those years ago.

The sad part is that Lily had not known where her daughter was, but we have discovered that the girl I knew as Marjorie was on occasions travelling north by car with her daughters passing through Purfleet Reserve to spend Christmas with her only son Ken at Port Macquarie. Not knowing her Mum who was alive and lived on the Purfleet Reserve at these times.

Like many other Aboriginal boys and girls, we were used as slave labour. Now the government is offering me peanuts in recognition of wages and child endowment owed to my mother, the cheek of the government bureaucrats. There is no justice for Aborigines in this country at present, hopefully such will come soon after such stories are told.

- Les Ridgeway





To me they were surrogate mothers when I were growing up; when I left school and began work they were more like really special friends. The thing they stressed to us always was that you are as good as, if not better than, everyone else. It is up to you. I grew up with a very, very positive outlook on life because of that.

- **Esther Bevan**, interview with Siobhan McHugh

The Shelter

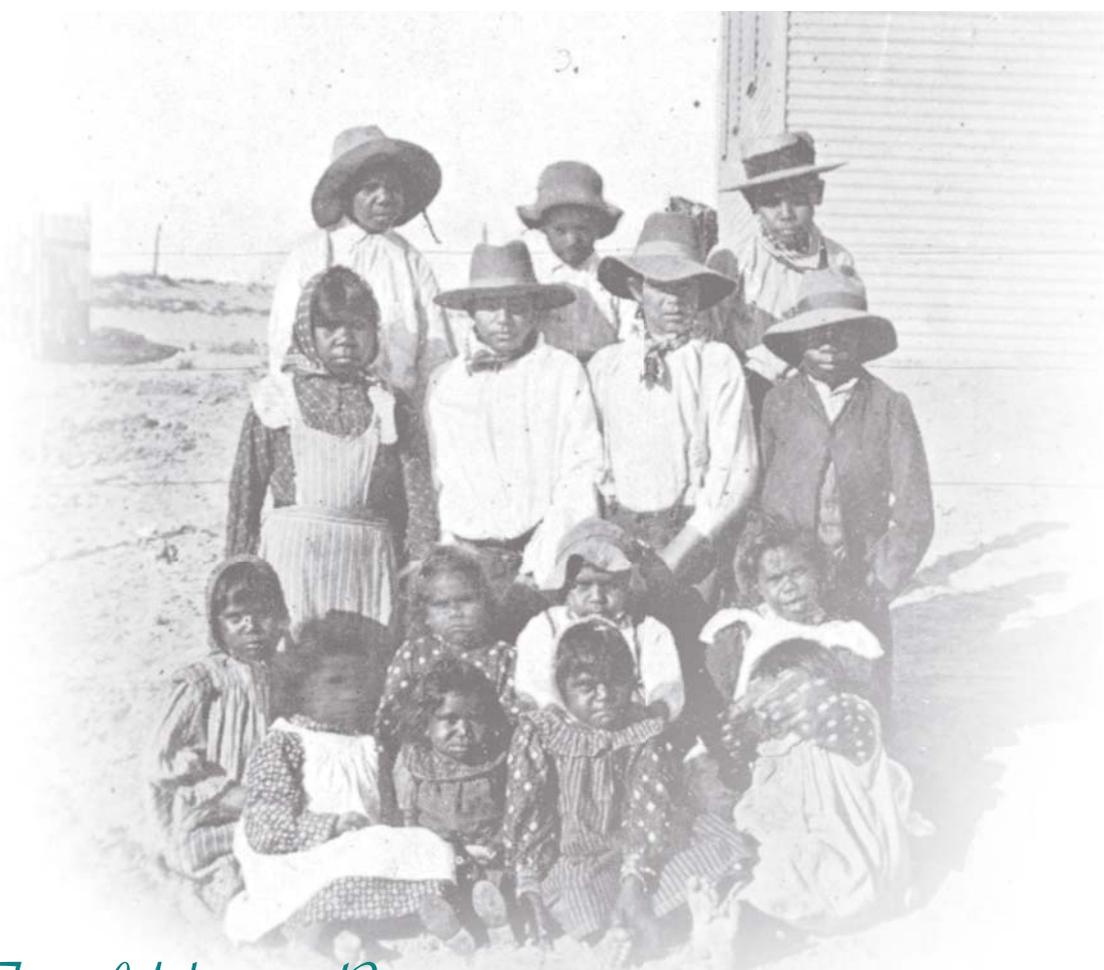
Row upon row we cowered
Between sheets threadbare but crisp
And brittle like sheets of white glass
Tucked too tight by our own childish hands
Tiny fingers trained on chilly mornings
In the art of "gaol corners" we were told
"This is how you'll make your beds in prison"
Some of us not yet ten years old
But we'd be making beds in gaol
It was not inconceivable
And how was I to know then
That gaol would be an improvement
On the sorry protection
Of Glebe Metropolitan Girls Shelter

- **Vickie Lee Roach**

The Powers that be during my incarceration in the Coventry Girls Home, told my sisters and I that we were no longer to speak my father's language, Bundjalung, and it was belted out of us until we no longer spoke it. We were then told every day that our parents did not want us - that's why you are here.

It was not until I was old enough and left the home, that I was confronted with the truth and learned of the government policies and practices that brought about the children being removed.

- **Elaine Turnbull**



The Warm Bed

*I was taken by white man
When I was six
Taken from our warm bed
And they left behind our sis*

*For the bed was surely crowded
And the hut had a dirt floor
But the warmth and the love there
We had no more.*

*With their crisp sheeted single beds
We were told we were lucky as can be
To be brought up by white man,
And they said we were free*

*Well the years passed by,
And for my family we cried,
To be back in that warm bed
Oh, just for a while.*

*For the white family gave us
What they long for
A good education, material things
And we had it all, but,
No-one will know the pain,
Of the longing for.*

*Well more years passed by
And now we still cry
For our dad and mum
Had suffered until they died*

*Our big sister still lives,
The one they left behind
To snatch her siblings from her
And her pain will never die*

*Can't you see white man?
For the damage we dread
We will never again
Be as one with our family
In that lovely warm bed*

- Suzanne Nelson

It just happened that my mother came once to see me, but she was sad, I could understand, she was upset. After being taken as a small child and going to see her as an adult, well, she said that I wasn't her daughter. You know, with all the hardship and the loss of her child, I suppose she felt it very bad that way, and she never, never talked about it. She just looked at me and said, 'you're not my daughter'. It was a long time you know? I mean taking a child away at a small age and then going back to see the mother, as an adult well, she would be shocked I suppose, thinking, oh you're not my daughter. That was the first and the last I've seen her.

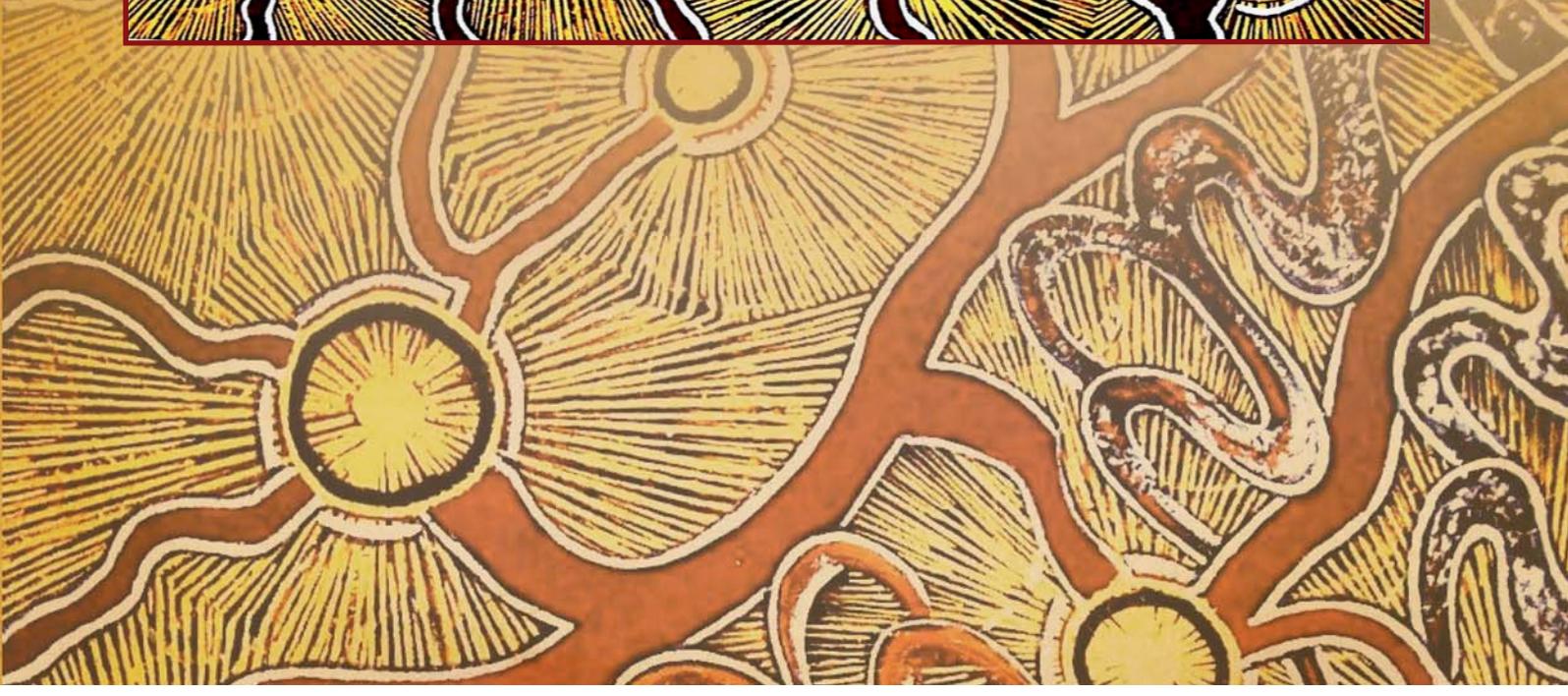
She didn't even let the other old people [know that] she had another daughter because it hurt her. She was broken up inside. She never mentioned she had another daughter. It's just recently, when the people say, "oh, it's your mum and all this and that", they always say, "oh, she never said anything about it, she never told us". Well I said, because she was upset and she had a broken heart.

And that's how she went to her grave, with a broken heart.

- Phyllis Bin Barka, interview with Siobhan McHugh



Journeys and Homecoming



'Rough Country', Robert Stuurman

The painting is done with natural pigments and is about the journeys of people who are either finding their identity or have found it through reunions.

Rough country is also out connection with the land as depicted by red ochre. It represents the life-blood of the country and also flows through our veins. Such intrinsic connection, are also with those who are not aware of this because they were taken away from their families or have lost it through past generations. Rough country is also reflected as life's journey with constant brown waves and swirls. The white pigment represents the good that can come out of such struggles in the shaping of character but does not necessarily help in the reconnecting of identity to land.

The yellow circles and lines represent reunions that have taken place where land connection is experienced and people find their place within culture. Even after a reunion though, rough country can still be there are adjustments along life's journey continue to take form.

The brown ring represents a contract against the yellow and indicates a defining moment when a reunion takes place. There are nine circles because nine represents a number of finality.

When identity is re-established, the land isn't as rough as it was to the individual and a sense of belonging allows the land to be like a mother to us.

If we do not respect the land then rough country is also experienced and can reflect in a number of difference ways such as salinity, fire, flood and drought. If one looks carefully the painting also represents a bushfire with not so noticeable cross sections of logs, yellow sparks and smoke. Fire is a life giver as well which also has correlations with the general meaning of the painting.

We must all learn to love the country we are from as it is part of our identity.

I am one of the Mission Children

Question Time

*Can anyone answer my question
What did I ever do wrong?
Why did you take me from my parents
When I was only young*

*You took me in a black car
With balloons all hanging out
Just me and my brother
We didn't know what this was all about*

*We didn't have a mother
To cuddle and kiss good-night
We didn't have a father
To teach us man's way in life*

*A mother and father's love
We never ever shared
Will someone answer our questions
Or are some people scared?*

- Fred Clark

"I am one of the former Mission Children and I was taken without our Parent's knowledge by a Catholic Missionary on the Mission truck with my brother and Cousin, they are both now deceased. I was brought up by the Catholics for 10 years, when my mother went to the Native Welfare in Narrogin to ask for us back, the welfare said no. Mum went screaming pulling her hair out of her head. Mum and Dad, now both deceased, walked all the way to Francis Xavier Mission in Wandaring to ask the Father Superior for us. We were not allowed to go home with our parents so you can imagine what Mum felt like. My Chores were milking cows at 5am in the morning when the grass was wet with dew, no shoes when clearing fields of roots and rocks. I did not have a childhood. Jennifer Narkle, my wife, was also in Mogumber Methodist Mission near Moora. Six of my family was there, we had no Parents to guide, love and nurture us, it was total strangers to handle our every needs. We also lost our childhood by being taken away from our Parents."

-Harry Narkle

We were left in the control of our grandmother on the Island after our mother died. And, she was brought over to visit me in the Home... I feel she just wanted to come and justify why we were taken and give us a hug and a kiss, because I had never known her... and she was denied that. I asked the foster mother, who is that old lady who looks through the gate and she said 'oh, she is some silly old black woman.'

- **Eddie Thomas**, interview with Janet Drummond

The Wicker Chair

*You thought I was cute didn't you
Ensnared in the tiny wicker chair
In the warmth of your kitchen
Not mine
Your matronly bulk, grey hair
And motherly air
Not mine but theirs
You cooked for your family
A plate for me
And listened abstractedly
Tight-lipped, disapproving
To my excited childish chatter
Incessant, as I gave you my life
Not yet three, for free
I didn't know, not then
That you had stolen me*

- **Vickie Roach**



Little China Doll

Hey little china doll, why don't I see you smile?
'They took away my toys and made me run for miles.
So little china doll, why the great big frown?
'they dragged me from my bed, to dig up frozen ground.'
Well, my little china doll, why don't you ever speak?
'try that 'round here, they'll isolate you for a week.'
But little China doll, what do they feed you in that quarter?
'Just a slice of plain bread and cup of luke warm water.'
What, little china doll, does go on with you?
'They froze my heart and they will yours too;
They've hit me with their fists of broken glass
And till this day, the nightmares last.
So tell me little china doll, how do you survive?
'There's only one place where a little girl can hide;
There are places in my mind, where they can never go.
They really resent that, you'd be shocked to know.
Dear little china doll, you seem like walking dead.
'That I am; everywhere except inside my head.'
How do you know china doll, that you did survive?
'I cut myself every week to feel if I'm alive.'
You're much too broke for me to fix, little china doll;
Your mind is strong but your heart so very cold.
'Just throw me back on the heap, they have since I was ten years old.

- Jeannie Hayes

I dedicate this poem to all the Hay girls who served time before me, with me and after me.

Eddie Thomas: "...the biggest game of football I think I've ever played... was in Hobart and it was combined VFL performance in Tasmania, the best footballers in Tasmania, and I am walking into the change room, and there's this dark chap coming toward me and he said 'Eddie'. It was my brother, and I was all emotional and I sat down and said, 'well, I'm not playing footy today; I want to spend time with you.' And he said, 'play, Eddie, let me see you play.' And out of the match, at the end of the match he was able to come into the club rooms and I was presented with one of the trophies for the best player of the day, and we certainly had some wonderful times after that."

Janet Drummond: And, so you played the game of your life for your brother?

Eddie Thomas: I did, yes, I did. I made him proud. I was thinking of him out there and it just made me feel that I had to do something to prove myself to him, but I didn't have to do a thing. I just think he was lost. He just could not accept what had happened, he never seemed to talk about it, and he never got over it. Even though my sister was nine years older and she could have helped him but I can never recall that she did talk to him about the times in the home, for some reason. But he just pined away really and never got over it.

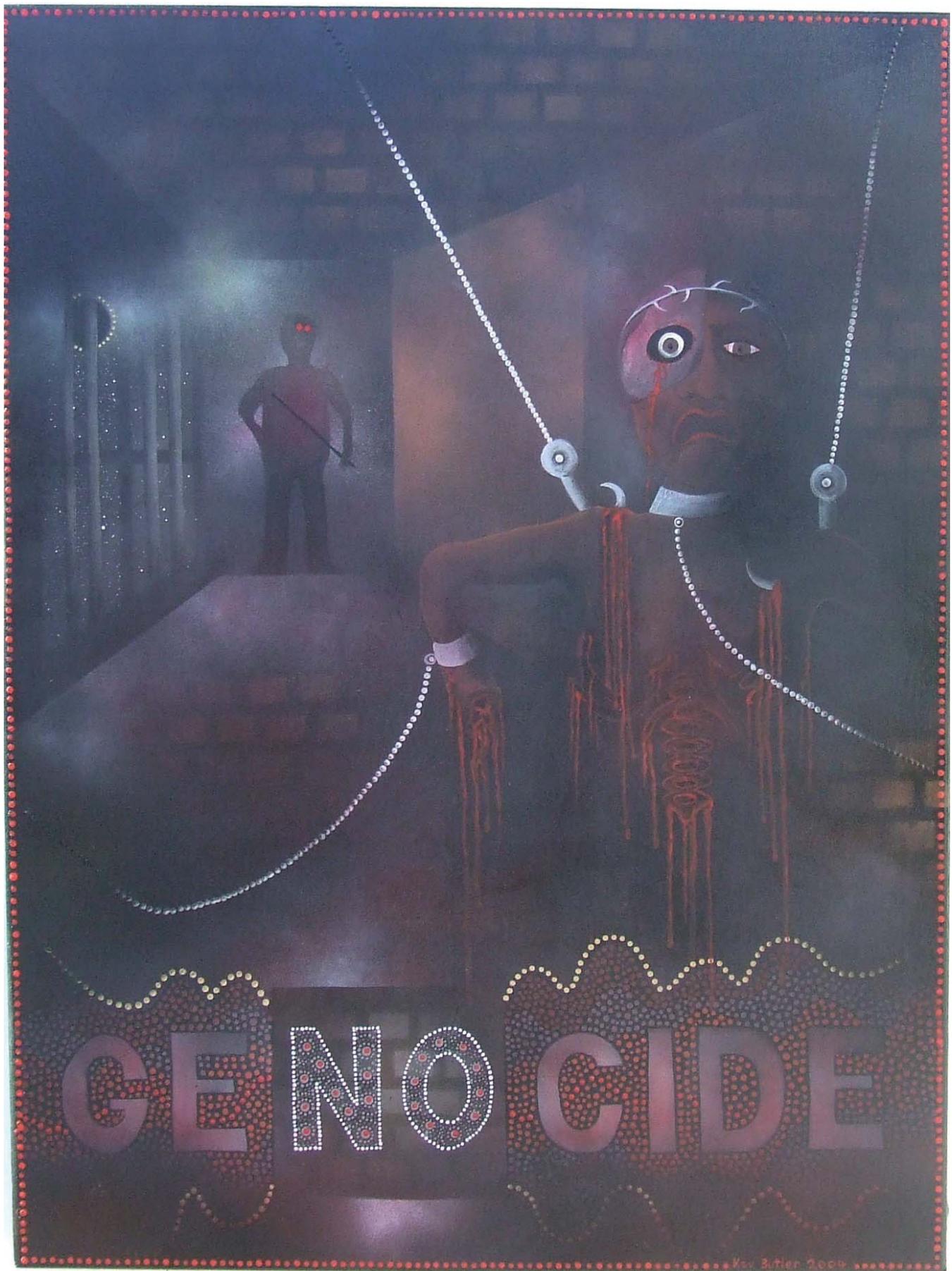
It was September, the 28th 1981. I was thirty-eight-years of age and about to meet my mother, Hazel, for the first time.

I was more curious than nervous. What did you call a mother you had never met before? We had spoken on the phone two nights ago. Hazel said she was Aboriginal, and that she and my grandmother had wanted to keep me, but had been forced to give me up.

I am looking at this woman walking towards me, smiling. She looks Maori. I want her to go away, she's not my mother. My mother's white, and my biological father is Negro. That's what my father said, thirteen years ago. He also said that the social worker at the home told him that no one wanted me as a baby and that I could have throwbacks, so I would have to be checked out by a doctor before I had a baby.

We are a few feet apart, when I realise who this woman is. Hazel told me what she looked like on the phone. I want to scream, because nothing my father told me was true.'

- Lorraine McGee-Sippel



'Genocide', Kevin Butler, 2004.

'With many years of continuous abuse it feels as though one's culture and spirit are slowly being torn away from black flesh, whilst having to assimilate into their alien lifestyle.'

My sister, Denise, and I are in our 50's and it has taken over 30 years to finally find our family connections.

Denise searched with the help of many others and was able to take our family back four generations and collect some very interesting historical information about the stolen generation and life on a mission in the 1800's - 1900's.

We always knew we were different when family came to visit but our parents hid the truth and it was only later we were actually told we were Aboriginal.

Today we now know we are from the Wiradjuri people, our great great grandmother went to the Warangesda Mission and our great grandmother was part of the stolen generation when she was taken from her family and kept in the mission until she was sent out as a domestic to a station and then married the white owner.

- Rooth Wilay Robertson

There was one night when I had just arrived at the showers under escort and my mate Beverley was there. We were the only two at the showers plus the screw. Beverly was just exiting the tub area after washing her pants and I was just going in to do mine, so as I passed her I kissed her on the cheek and the screw caught me. I was sent to to the office. The screw called me a dirty thing and slapped my face."

- Jeannie Hayes

Baby Bunting

*Your little baby Bunting,
Now grown has gone a hunting,
With wommera in hand.
And walks this ancient land,
Through many years of searching,
Over vast tracks unearthing,
Hidden pasts from 'their' keep,
In futures truth does seek,
The right story now to tell,
To hand down and dispel,
Fiction's asseverate wrongs,
For her Daughter's future songs.*

- Yveane Fallon

Jeannie Hayes, photograph taken after her release from the Parramatta Girls Home, 1970.
Photograph reproduced courtesy of Jeannie Hayes.



I was adopted when I was 6 weeks old by lovely people. My mum was English and my dad was Australian we lived in Sydney and I have a brother named David 10 yrs older than me.

I didn't know I was Aboriginal till I was about 12. It was a bit scary and I wondered about my birth mother. I read about Link Up but because I didn't know anything I just put it in the back of my head always being there.

Much later, I met my husband-to-be, Alwyn. He was also taken away when he was six years old and was fostered with a family. He was finally reunited with his family and mother where we were all together it was an emotional time for all. Not long after, his mother passed away. He has two brothers and four sisters. We go back home a lot to catch up with everybody.



One day Alwyn told me he had three foster sisters and a brother their names are Cindy Dargon, Eve Leon, Delia Jerrett (dec), Douglas Boney. Anyway, one day Alwyn said "I want you to meet one of my foster sisters, Delia", she lived in Cessnock. So we went up Al myself and Doug.

We all stayed at her house and met her children she had a boy Norm and a girl Rachele. The next day, Delia (or Della) wanted Al and Doug and myself to go and see Aunty Marie who was living up there too. Over lunch, we got talking.

I told Delia and Aunty Marie I was Aboriginal and was trying to find my family. Aunty Marie couldn't think of Della's last name, but it started with 'J'. I said my last name started with J because my mother's name was Ada Evelyn Jerrett Smith and she said "Ohhh! that's my mothers name!" we were in shock and just went silent.

Aunty Marie rang mum in Tasmania and she couldn't believe it- that's how I found my sister Dell. I met nieces and nephews and another sister Violet. My mother has passed on a long time ago. I never got to know her and I don't know who my father is. After a few years we discovered that we had another two brothers and a sister so altogether there are ten, Ronald, Clancy, David, Wayne, Kevin, Jason, Violet, Delia, Kerrie, Joanne.

Kerrie Roberts

*Kerrie Roberts and her family.
Photograph courtesy of Kerrie Roberts.*

Let's Go Home

Oh little one, I've come to take you
Home where you belong
You've waited here alone and sad
For me for far too long
I don't know how I could have left you
In this awful place
But here now, take my hand
And dry those tears upon your face
It's taken long I know
But there were mountains in my path
And rocky roads led me astray
And plunged me into dark
But suddenly, I found the way
And I had to come for you
'Coz little one, I'm goin' home
And I'm takin' you with me too

- Vickie Roach





Reconciliation

'This painting is the story of us children coming home', Chris Mason, 2007

'Our totem is the goanna and is culturally significant with the black and white in the centre representing assimilation and how we have learnt to live within the framework of white society. The different shades of colour in the middle show no matter the colour of our skin we are one and do belong. The border represents Link-up who made this story possible and helped bring us home. The red represents our Aboriginal bloodline that links us together. With the outer colours showing the world and the bright future full of possibilities.

The symbols are of women and men sitting symbolising Chris and his sisters. 'Near the head of the goanna is my eldest sister, she's at the head of the family- then Lynn, Debbie and Karen, myself and my youngest sister, Roberta down the bottom.

'Jangali' is my Aboriginal name

Siobhan McHugh: So when you go back to where you were originally from, do you still feel a sense of connection to that country?

Daisy Howard: I do, yes. When I go back there I still feel it. I cry too. Like I say, I would rather be brought up that way and knowing everything, than being brought up the other way and not knowing anything. I think it hurts more to know now what happened because, I mean, there's nothing we can do really.

Siobhan McHugh: If you went back to live there would you live in the Aboriginal way or the western kind of European Catholic way, would you do things the traditional custom way, or not?

Daisy Howard: No, I think I always be a Catholic. Like in town and go to Church and things like that. I don't think I'll ever forget that. I went a few times with the people from the language centre. I mean I just pick up a few words here and there - like my Aboriginal name. 'Jangali' is my Aboriginal name.

I feel sad at times not meeting my mother, especially my mother, but in the long run, now that I grew up and I had me own children and I battled hard with my children, so what was more concern was my children. I battled hard for them; I didn't get any help from anyone. So that's all I've got, is my children. That's the happiness I've got from all that - my children come first, and I think it's a wonderful thing to have children.

I've had my children and looked after them and gave them caring and everything, but I didn't speak about my background because I never knew anything about it. The minute you talk about these things some of the Europeans say, 'oh bullshit', and all things like that. And that hurts us, you know? They didn't go through it. And that was the government policy, and I think that the government should recognise these things. But the Prime Minister don't understand anyway.

- Phyllis Bin Barka, interview with Siobhan McHugh

*Trust- no
Helplessness
Endurance*



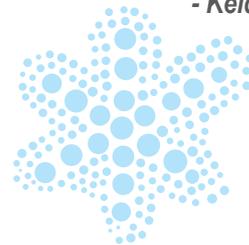
*Suffer of children
Toleration
On my own
Loss of identity
Evil people
Not letting me go*



*Going to another place
English voices
Nervous
Endless suffering
Racism
Action
Teasing
Incorrect to do that
Option- no
No one understood*

*Sad Children
Terrified
On my own
Lost my identity
Evil men
Not feeling happy*

- Keidan Bates



- Tahlee Connors

When societies or cultures collide it is often the children who suffer most. For Aboriginal children, the British colonisation of Australia was no exception. During the first 120 or so years of European settlement, successive governments either permitted or actively pursued policies of removing Aboriginal children from their parents and communities. The implementation of these policies represents one of the most shameful episodes in the treatment of my people by white Australians.



Although frequently motivated by good intentions, the removal of Aboriginal children was to embitter relations between the two peoples and cause enormous pain and suffering to the children and their parents. The damage caused to parents and families persists today.

The past can not be changed but some of the wounds can be healed. The process of reconciliation must start with a candid recognition of what took place- the forcible removal of many Aboriginal children from their parents and communities.

- George Toongerie



One of my earliest memories was the next door neighbour calling me a black bastard and my adoptive parent's reaction. Until then I was oblivious to skin colour. That when the explanations started and to my adoptive families credit they tried so hard to bring me up that I feel I owe them so much for the grief I have caused over the years. I put my behaviour down to an identity crisis and all the drama one experiences in trying to find their way. I was looking in all the wrong places only to find trouble. All I found were drug addicts, alcoholics and criminals but no acceptance. This led to violence, anti-social activity, promiscuity and other risk taking behaviours only to find no relief. Death couldn't come fast enough but all there was goal and hospitalisation in which case I am still in.

These activities stopped and I changed completely because I found my biological family and found where I fitted in, in the world. I finally felt I knew who I was and didn't have to be good enough for anyone else. I know I survived the hard part and now it is all about the good stuff. Second chances do come along for some and if and when they do they must be embraced with both hands. Link-up made it all possible and I am forever thankful. The next important thing for me to do is meet my aunty and go to Bre, my country, and feel the feeling I long for. This day will happen and it keeps me going through the hard days. My culture is important to me and I enjoy learning about it and look forward to learning more ever day.

- Christopher Mason

When I was about four or five, I asked Mum why I was different to her, my father and my brother. Even though we lived together as a family and had the same surname, I knew something was amiss because I was black and they were white. For a long time Mum wouldn't answer my question directly. In the end, to shut me up I think, she told me that I was 'different' because "God left you in the oven too long". What did this mean? Who was this God fella?

About a year later, I raised the question with Mum again. My insistence paid off. Mum and Pop sat me down in the living room one night and solemnly told me that there was something they wanted to tell me. We had just finished dinner, the wood fire was crackling and the radio was tuned to one of the weekly serials. Pop switched the radio off. This must be serious I thought. He eventually spoke up and said gravely "Son, the reason you're different is because you're adopted". Mum was close to tears in anticipation of what effect these words would have on me. I turned to them both and said, "So, if you're adopted, it means you're black, is that right?"

After several prolonged conversations about what being adopted meant, I realised, selfishly I suppose, that I must have another mother and father, perhaps other brothers, sisters, uncles and aunts too. Perhaps even another grandma? Not that there was anything wrong with my adoptive family. My adoptive parents grew me up with all the love and material comfort that was their's to give from when I was seven months old. They love me and I love them, as a son should. At that time, however, the word "Aboriginal" was uttered in clandestine whispers.

- John Williams Mozely

My grandmother, Rebecca, was born around 1890. She lived with her tribal people, parents and relations around the Kempsey area. Rebecca was the youngest of a big family. One day some religious people came, they thought she was a pretty little girl. She was a full blood aborigine about five years old. Anyway those people took her to live with them.

Rebecca could not have been looked after too well. At the age of fourteen she gave birth to my mother Grace and later on Esther, Violet and May. She married my grandfather Laurie and at the age of twenty-three she died from TB. Grandfather took the four girls to live with their Aunty and Uncle on their mother's side. Grandfather worked and supported the four girls.

Mum said in those days the aboriginals did not drink. She often recalled going to the river and her Uncle spearing fish and diving for cobbler. Mum had eaten kangaroo, koala bear, turtles and porcupine. She knew which berries were edible, we were shown by her how to dig for yams and how to find witchetty grubs. My mother also spoke in several aboriginal languages she knew as a small girl. The aboriginals had very strict laws and were decent people. They were kind and had respectable morals...

Years later Grandfather told my mother a policeman came to his work with papers to sign. The girls were to be placed in Cootamundra Home where they would be trained to get a job when they grew up. If grandfather didn't sign the papers he would go to jail and never come out, this was around 1915. My grandfather was told he was to take the four girls by boat to Sydney. The girls just cried and cried and the relations were wailing just like they did when Granny Rebecca had died.

In Sydney my mother and Esther were sent by coach to Cootamundra. Violet and May were sent to the babies' home at Rockdale. Grace and Esther never saw their sister Violet again. She died at Waterfall Hospital within two years from TB. My mother was to wait twenty years before she was to see her baby sister May again.

Cootamundra in those days was very strict and cruel. The home was overcrowded. Girls were coming and going all the time. The girls were taught reading, writing and arithmetic. All the girls had to learn to scrub, launder and cook.

Mum remembered once a girl who did not move too quick. She was tied to the old bell post and belted continuously. She died that night, still tied to the post, no girl ever knew what happened to the body or where she was buried... Some girls were belted and sexually abused by their masters and sent to the missions to have their babies. Some girls just disappeared never to be seen or heard of again...

Early one morning in November 1952 the manager from Burnt Bridge Mission came to our home with a policeman. I could hear him saying to Mum, 'I am taking the two girls and placing them in Cootamundra Home'. My father was saying, 'What right have you?'. The manager said he can do what he likes, they said my father had a bad character (I presume they said this as my father associated with Aboriginal people). They would not let us kiss our father goodbye, I will never forget the sad look on his face. He was unwell and he worked very hard all his life as a timber-cutter. That was the last time I saw my father, he died within two years after.

We were taken to the manager's house at Burnt Bridge. Next morning we were in court. I remember the judge saying, 'These girls don't look neglected to me'. The manager was saying all sorts of things. He wanted us placed in Cootamundra Home. So we were sent away not knowing

that it would be five years before we came back to Kempsey again... I had often thought of running away but Kate was there and I was told to always look after her. I had just turned eleven and Kate was still only seven. I often think now of Cootamundra as a sad place, I think of thousands of girls who went through that home, some girls that knew what family love was and others that never knew; they were taken away as babies.

Some of the staff were cruel to the girls. Punishment was caning or belting and being locked in the box-room or the old morgue... I cannot say from my memories Cootamundra was a happy place. In the home on Sundays we often went to two different churches, hymns every Sunday night. The Seventh Day Adventist and Salvation Army came through the week. With all the different religions it was very confusing to find out my own personal and religious beliefs throughout my life...

One day the matron called me to her office. She said it was decided by the Board that Kate and myself were to go and live with a lady in a private house. The Board thought we were too 'white' for the home. We were to be used as an experiment and if everything worked out well, more girls would be sent later on. We travelled all day long. Late afternoon we stopped at this house in Narromine. There lived Mrs S., her son and at weekends her husband Lionel...

The Scottish woman hated me because I would not call her 'Mum'. She told everyone I was bad. She made us stay up late sewing, knitting and darning that pillowcase full of endless socks. Often we weren't allowed to bed till after 11 p.m... Mrs S. did not allow me to do homework, therefore my schoolwork suffered and myself - a nervous wreck...

During [my] time [with Mrs. S] I was belted naked repeatedly, whenever she had the urge. She was quite mad. I had to cook, clean, attend to her customers' laundry. I was used and humiliated. The Board knew she was refused anymore white children yet they sent us there.

Near the end of our stay she got Mr F. from Dubbo to visit. She tried to have me put in Parramatta Girls' Home. By this time I knew other people had complained to the Board. Mr F. asked me if I wanted to go to a white home or back to Cootamundra. So a couple of days later we were back in the Home. It was hard to believe we had gotten away from that woman.

It wasn't long after we were back at the Home and Matron called me to her office. She wanted to know what had happened at Narromine. I told her everything. She said the experiment did not work and she would write to the Board for fear they would send more girls out. It did not do any good though because more than half the girls were fostered out over the next three years...

In December 1957 our mother finally got us home. She was the first Aboriginal to move into a Commission house. My mother died four years later, she suffered high blood pressure, she was 54 years old. It was fight all the way to survive because she was born an Aboriginal.

I still can't see why we were taken away from our home. We were not neglected... Our father worked hard and provided for us and we came from a very close and loving family. I feel our childhood has been taken away from us and it has left a big hole in our lives.

Confidential submission 437 to the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families, New South Wales

Dear Jennifer,

My name is Tim Ratty and I'm a student at Sherbrook Community School and I have just read your story and was shocked to hear of the torment you have gone through in your stolen childhood. Your letter moved me deep inside of my heart and now my only hope for you is that you are living happily far from discomfort.

Yours sincerely,
Tim Ratty

- Tim Ratty

Dear Jennifer,

My name is Vonnice, I am almost 15 years old, I go to Sherbrook Community School I live in Cockatoo and I have just finished reading your story. To have been through that must have been horrible. What really disturbed me was Mrs S. when you had to stay up late sewing, knitting and wouldn't let you do your homework! You must have been really strong to have lived through that from being taken away from your own mother. My nephew Jack was taken by his mum and my brother has missed his birthday and all. She took him to England and won't let him back in months. But my brother is still standing strong. I know that this is nothing like your story. And I wish you didn't have to live through that.

I'm sorry for what you have been through.

From,
Vonnice

- Veronica Bingham

Dear Jennifer,

My name is Stephanie Dennis. I am in year 9 and I live in Melbourne with my mum, brothers and sister. My dad doesn't live with us any more, but I still see him some times. I read your story and it really touched and inspired me. If I said I know how you felt I would be lying. I have never felt anything that could almost even compare to the pain you have felt. I have never felt that my land and my people were so closely connected- I have not had "country" to call my family's country. I don't know what it is like to be taken away from home, from the people I love. I am so happy that you got through all that and got to go back home! It was so nice to read your story and know that there are strong women out there who can fight for their rights. Keep on fighting Jennifer! You know you deserve it!

Yours in friendship,
Stephanie.

- Stephanie Dennis

I was put in the Melbourne City Mission, then Torana then back to Melbourne City Mission all before the age of three. After that I went to live with the woman who adopted my mum, who was taken off her mother in the 1930's, under the guise of 'no means of support'. Aboriginal people had little control over their own lives. Our ancestors were told not to speak their own language, and as a result, many of the hundreds of Aboriginal dialects once used have been lost.

Our ancestors, my people, the Yorta Yorta people lived before the arrival of the white man as a civilised society. My great grandmother was a Morgan, a Yorta Yorta Woman. The Yorta Yorta tribe occupied a unique stretch of territory located in what is now known as the Murray-Goulbourn region. At the time of the invasion or before contact the population is estimated to be approximately 2,400. Within the first generation in contact with the European invasion, the Yorta Yorta population was reduced by 85%.

They came to control our ancestors and our land instead of understanding and working with them. This is still continuing today.

- Sandra Barber (Morgan)

At three years of age I was taken from my parents and placed in Wandering Mission in south-west W.A. In the Mission I was in the Choir and like the other kids in the Choir I was doing fine when the word came that we were going to sing in Melbourne, Victoria. This was very exciting for us little Nyoongah kids. Just before the Choir was to go, I was told that I wasn't good enough and therefore wouldn't be going on the trip. I was devastated and heart-broken and could only watch with envy as my brothers and sisters in the Choir waved goodbye as they left to go to Melbourne. After twelve years at the Mission I ran away, at the age of fifteen to find my mother, which I did.

After leaving the Mission I played in Rock and Roll bands and gradually became better at singing and playing music. Ironically, I am the only one out of the Choir that took up music and has progressed to a level where I am now a well-known, capable and qualified musician. Since a teenager I have been playing regularly gigs and have produced a CD album and have also produced a number of CD singles along the way.

In sharing this story I want to give positive encouragement to our Indigenous people. As you can see I was rejected and could have allowed this rejection to dictate my life and could have rejected any notion of ever being a musician. However I didn't, I turned it around and became exactly what they said that I wasn't - a good musician. I am now envied and praised by many people and will always love playing music and singing and find it is wonderful therapy that can promote healing.

If someone selfishly tells you that you are not good enough, reject their judgement and turn it around if you know that you are good enough. You don't have to aim to be the greatest in the world but you can aim to be the greatest that you can be.

- Fred Penny

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, tabled a much needed report to the Federal Australian Government in to the removal practices of past government policies into the Stolen Generations. I am a member of the Stolen Generations.

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Report provided a voice for the Stolen Generations and allowed the wider population of Australia to hear first hand experiences of those whom were taken.

Some people regard the removal practices as genocide a strong word indeed; removal of a generation of children breaks the lineage of families and can be felt throughout generations to come. **The effects are enormous on Aboriginal culture and people have lost family, language and culture**, therefore results have shown that Indigenous people self medicate to try to lose the trauma and pain associated with their life's experience.

My personal experience of huge trauma was and is an ongoing healing process still conducted today. Merely talking of my experience helps relieve pent up negative emotions and turning these emotions into a positive ones. This journey may not work for everyone , however I am convinced that by addressing the traumatic feelings the journey of healing begins.

I am in my third year of Adult Education at the University of Technology Sydney and when I finish my years of study I will design healing programs for my people who are still on a journey of healing.

Aboriginal people are spiritual beings and by addressing mind / body / spirit then the process of healing can begin. This can be a positive for all Australians on the path to becoming a great nation and country!

- Elaine Turnbull

One Love, One Land

*One love, one land, yet we are a race apart.
Ours is the love of a mother
and we speak it from the heart.
For love of our land and its people
and all that it provides,
from desert and forest
and rivers,
wattle myall gum and
gulgee tree-
Possum, kangaroo, jingo
and emu,
Plenty for me and you.*

*Just 50 years you gave us,
To climb up to where
you are at.
You've had a thousand times more,
so don't blame us for that.
One love - one land between us.
Let's love her as we should,
Teach us how to be better,
and do us all some good!*

- Jonathon Cox

I Am To Be

*I am to be
The fly at your eye
You just can't brush away
Despite how hard you try.*

*I am to be
The thorn in your side
Pricking you consistently
Despite all your pride.*

*I am to be
The dog at your heel
Tenaciously gnawing you
Despite your appeal.*

*I am to be
Your history's ghost returned
Haunting every moment
Despite your concerns.*

*I am to be
The disease in your soul
Perpetually rancid
'Til you pay the toll.*

*I am
The offspring of my ancestors
Baring truths memory
Despite all of yours.*

Jenny Thomas: "Well, I answered the phone and there was this old lady and she said 'May I speak to Eddie please' and I said 'may I ask who's calling please?' and she said 'Dear, I was in the home that Eddie was in when he got taken away' and she told me her name. So I called Eddie and her name didn't register and then all of a sudden it clicked who the lady was, but she was seventy-eight and she never ever knew where he went to... 'Dear' she said, 'I love him, loved him all those years and I have been looking for him all these years.' All those years she did not know where he went, then through the Parliament thing (Tasmanian Stolen Generations Compensation Scheme), he was on the news and she'd seen him. Her son rang her and said 'mum have you been watching the news?' She said, 'by then I was all emotional, because it all brought everything back. She went down and got the number and rang here... So I took him up there and... she told me exactly what went on (in the children's home in Launceston) and she said 'Dear, you have no idea about all the things, it's all true... And that made Eddie feel that everything was all right now because he could hear someone else telling it how it was and he knew it was true."

Eddie Thomas: That was the time it all came out for me, because, I did not really want to think about those times. I mean, you know sometimes, you feel when you're telling adults what happened, and umm, do that believe you? Because it was so awful what happened, you just feel like they can't believe you. But that lady substantiated for me what I thought had happened there in the home.

- Interview with Janet Drummond.



Index

'Finding my Family', Rooth Wilay Robertson

My painting depicts each family member, with all the different skin colours, as puzzle pieces finally all joined up to complete our story.

"On 13th July 1921, the Smith children were removed from Warangesda. White history would record that these actions were taken in the best interest of the children. White history lies. Lillian and Flora were taken to the Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls Training Home and the three boys were taken to the Singleton Boys Home, thence to Kinchela Boys Home in Kempsey. Lillian was never to see her mother, father or brothers again. Her sister Flora was to provide the only information on Lilly's time in Cootamundra: 'Lilly was a good writer and a good singer, but she was never happy, she cried all the time.'

My aunt Lillian died on 27th July 1991. My mother Flora died the same year on 21st November. On 12th March 1992, the two small caskets containing Lilly and Flora's ashes were buried in their mother Violet's grave in the Goulburn Cemetery. Separated for 72 years in life, they were finally reunited in death."

- Beverley Gulambali Elphick

Baldwin, Helen: This letter is written by Helen's great Grandfather, Frederick Carmichael requesting the return of his three grand daughters, Helen's mother Nellie and Nellie's sisters, Mary and Sarah after they were taken from his care on the Lake Tyres Mission Station in Victoria. Nellie's children were also taken at birth and placed in institutions. It has taken Helen 25 years to locate all five of her brothers and sisters. The story of Helen and her family can be found at: <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/history/hindsight/stories/s1205514.htm>

Barber (Morgan), Sandra: Sandra is a Yorta Yorta woman. She was taken from her mother and placed in institutions and then placed in foster care with the woman who had also adopted Sandra's mother, taken from her family in the 1930's. She has three children and lives in Melbourne.

Bates, Kiedan: Kiedan attends primary school in NSW.

Bingham, Veronica: Vonnie attends high school in Cockatoo. Her letter is addressed to an anonymous woman, 'Jennifer' who gave evidence at the original *National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*. Her story is part of HREOC's educational materials on the Bringing them home report, which can be accessed at: www.humanrights.gov.au/bth

Butler, Kevin: Kevin is from the Gumbaingirr community (Nambucca Heads) in NSW. He was adopted out as a child. In 1988, Kevin began to paint Aboriginal art. This was his way of getting in touch with his lost heritage. Kevin's artwork also featured in the *Bringing them home Report*.

'Someone once told me I should paint my dreams. I went one step further and painted my nightmares. For many stolen children who were raised by people who do not even share the same DNA, it is like being a restrained prisoner behind metal bars.'

Clark, Fred: Fred is a Yorta Yorta man. He and his two brothers were separated when they were stolen. Fred grew up in Ballarat Orphanage. Fred has a daughter and a grand-daughter and lives in Melbourne.

Connors, Tahlee: Tahlee is attending primary school in Glebe.

Coolwell, Alfred: Alfred began searching for his family as a young adult. His tribe is the Mununjali from Beaudesert, South East Queensland.

This photo was taken by Emily Bullock:

Back row from left- Ailsa Coolwell (father's sister), Alfred Coolwell, Grace Coolwell (Alfred's sister), Mary Sandy (Alfred's aunt), Norm (Ailsa's husband). Front row from left- Lena Yarry (Alfred's sister), Bradley Coolwell (nephew).

Copely, Ivan: My name is Ivan Copely "Tiwu" and I'm the second of six children. Ngai Tandanya-ngga Worni. (I'm of Adelaide). I am a Kurna/Peramangk man, my Great Grandmother was born near Womma-uk-urta (Mt Barker) 1860's on the land of the Per-a-Mangk People, near a government water hole and my Grandfather, Father, Mother & myself were raised on Kurna land around Plympton and the Sand hills around Glenelg North.

Most of my life has been learning about my Aboriginal heritage, customs and have a good knowledge of sacred sites and their dreaming through out the Peramangk, Kurna Lands and some of their surrounding Nations in South Australia. My Family also came from West Coast or were at the Poonindie Mission, Point Pearce, Point McLeay and Harrogate.

Cox, Jonathon: Jonathon was taken from his mother two weeks after he was born. He was made a ward of the state and fostered until, at 21 months, he was adopted and raised by loving adoptive parents Ron and Marie Cox, to whom he dedicates his contribution to this publication. They worked for much of their lives to better the lives of Aboriginal Australians.

Dennis, Stephanie: Stephanie attends high school in Melbourne. She wrote this letter of support to 'Jennifer' a confidential submission to the original *National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*. Jennifer's story is part of HREOC's educational materials on the Bringing them home report, which can be accessed at: www.humanrights.gov.au/bth

Elphick, Beverley Gulambali: Lillian Smith is Beverley's aunt. She and her sister Flora (Beverley's mother) and brothers, Clarence, Hector and Bruce were taken from their family in 1921.

Fallon, Yveane: Yve has both Koori and Celtic heritage, and spent time in institutional care as a child. She is still searching for her Aboriginal roots.

Artwork: The Rainbow Serpent

'This painting is in Indian ink and is a variation of the Aboriginal flag. The Rainbow serpent entangled from the centre of the sun and spreading to all corners of our nation signifying first people's unity and the spirit of the rainbow serpent across the land. The patterns although varying, are interlocked and overlapped in displays of Koori and Celtic styles to show the connectiveness and diversity of our peoples. The land in white, the sun centre circle, and each dotted line are representing our ancestors, descendants and future generations.'

Grant, Beverley Lipscomb: Bev is a Wiradjuri woman and spent her first three years with her family on the Lachlan River at Goolagong NSW until she was taken to the Aboriginal Mission Children's Home, Bomaderry. She excelled at school and went to University to train as a nurse. Bev has been working in health, particularly Aboriginal health research ever since. Beverley's mother was also taken and attended the Cootamundra Aboriginal Girl's Home.

Haines, Roseanne: Roseanne was born in Tasmania. She is the sixth of 15 children that were all taken from her mother. 'My family is still torn apart and still today the pain is still very fresh and fractured.'

Artwork (below): My first two years of life were blessed with love; this love gave me my spiritual inner strength to survive when I was taken away. I was made a state ward and placed in foster care. After the birth of my first child I knew I had to express the pain I felt from within before it consumed my entire body, spirit and soul. I couldn't write it or speak it, the pain was so intense, I felt shame. So I thought I'd try drawing it. This is the result I've kept shamefully hidden for 24 years. This is part of my story.



'My family is still torn apart and still today the pain is still very fresh and fractured', Rosanne Haines.

Hayes, Jeannie: Jeannie is the fourth child of ten. Her parents are of Aboriginal and Irish Catholic descent. Jeannie was raised in Taillem Bend on the banks of the Murray River, South Australia. She was incarcerated between 1968 and 1970 in various state institutions in NSW. Jeannie has one son and enjoys the outdoors- the beach, bushwalking and camping. She now lives on the Central Coast.

Hooker, Mary: Mary and her brothers and sister were taken away from their mother, separated and sent to various homes including Rystone, Yarra Bay, Montrose and Lynwood Hall.

Kruger, Alec: As an infant, Alec Kruger was removed from his family and spent much of his early life with his people, and became aware of how much had been taken from him. In the 1990s, Alec initiated legal action against the Commonwealth. He claimed that the Northern Territory Ordinance under which Aboriginal children like him were removed from their families was invalid because it violated a number of rights (explicit and implied) in the Constitution. He also claimed that the Ordinance was an instrument of genocide and was therefore unlawful. In 1997 the High Court of Australia found that the territories power in the Constitution (s122) could be exercised by the Commonwealth without regard to the rights of Australians living in the territories, and therefore the Ordinance was valid. It also found that the intent of the Ordinance was not to destroy Aboriginal peoples, and so was not an instrument of genocide - regardless of its impact. While Alec Kruger's case failed, it threw into sharp relief the lack of rights of all Australians, including Indigenous Australians, under the Constitution. It also flagged some of the hurdles that other Stolen Generation litigants might face. In this way it paved the way for the first successful claim for compensation by a member of the Stolen Generation - in *Trevorrow v South Australia* - ten years later.

Leon, Charles Larry: Charles was taken at three yrs old and placed in foster care. 'When I was growing up I felt there was something different about me. In 2003 I met my birth mother. I found out that I had nine sisters but I never knew any of them until April 2003 when I went to a religious rally at Redfern Block. On the second night I sat next to an Aboriginal woman who offered me something to eat. I told her I was looking for my birth family. It was a miracle! She knew two of my sisters and a couple of days later brought one of my sisters to meet me. So far I have met six sisters, and yet my journey has just begun as I recover my lost history and culture.' Charles has been singing with the Sydney Street Choir for six years.

Love, Lawry: Lawry is an artist who has spent considerable time in the Northern Territory over the last 7 years.

'I was working for a Mini Bus company and got talking to many Aboriginal people, who told me they were taken away as children from their land and their people, and put in institutions. I started to wonder in what way I could do something to inform the general public about the things that happened to these children, and the way that being taken away stripped them of their culture.'

Being an artist, I decided to paint Culture Shock, an exhibition of 18 paintings. I approached the South Australian Museum to discuss exhibiting the story, and they came on board, along with ATSIC. During the five months of the Exhibition, I made available blank canvasses, for anyone who had something to say, or a message to leave, to write it on those canvasses. Many people from the Stolen Generation, ex Police Officers involved in taking the children, and members of the general public expressed their sorrow.'

Mason, Christopher: Chris Mason is an Aboriginal man of the Gnemba clan from Brewarrina. He has been learning about Aboriginal art as a way to reconnect with this culture and country and looks forward to meeting his family as he finds them. This dot painting is his second artwork.

McGee-Sippel, Lorraine: Lorraine is a Yorta Yorta woman. She has performed her work at the State Library of NSW, the NSW Writer's Centre, Reconciliation meetings and the Koori radio program, Awaye. Excerpts of Lorraine's story have also appeared in *Many Voices: Reflections on experiences of indigenous child separations*, edited by Doreen Mellor and Anna Haebich. Lorraine's autobiography, *Hey Mum, What's a Half Caste?* was short-listed for the David Uniapon Award in 2006.

'My writing is in response to the pain I felt from not knowing my family and true cultural identity.'

McHugh, Siobhan: Siobhan is a freelance Irish-born documentary maker, oral historian and writer. These extracted interviews were taken from her radio documentary, *Beagle Bay: Irish Nuns and Stolen Children*. The documentary features Phyllis Bin Barka and Daisy Howard and their experiences of being stolen from the East Kimberley and growing up with the Irish nuns at Beagle Bay. The documentary was short-listed for a Walkley Award for Excellence in Journalism.

This documentary can be accessed in full here: www.humanrights.gov.au/bth
For more information about Siobhan and her work visit www.mchugh.org

McInerney, Kunyi: June- Anne, named Kunyi by her family, was born on Todmorton Station, South Australia in 1951. At the age of four, Kunyi along with her sister and two brothers were placed in the Oodnadatta Children's Mission Home. The Missionaries renamed her Anne. At eight, Kunyi was fostered out in Adelaide where she was named June. She still lives in Adelaide with her three children.

Kunyi's works portray a landscape remembered from childhood- paintings of family and friends, remembered experiences expressing a strong feeling for her people and environment. Her works shown here are rendered in oil on canvas. Kunyi graduated from the University of South Australia in 1995.

Artwork (pg 18) 'The Punishment', 1994

'This painting is about us in Oodnadatta Mission. If we ripped our dresses or shorts we were made to wear potato sack dresses. The missionaries cut a hole for the head and two holes for the arms to fit in.

We could not play in this bag dress, as it was too itchy. That is why the girl is sitting on the tin can. The boy is sitting next to her as a comfort to the girl- avoiding eye contact with the missionary as she would hunt him away. We would wear this sack till we had learnt not rip our clothes again. Our clothes got ripped because we climbed wire fences that surrounded the mission home and we would climb over them instead of going through the gate, as the gate was further down the fence. If we were playing chase it was quicker to climb the fence than get caught by the person who was chasing.'

Artwork (pg 44) 'The Box', 1994

This painting is about me trapped in a world of daily torture and yelling abuse. I never seem to do anything right, - the foster parents- had no patience or love for us. To me they fostered us to get praise etc from the church we used to go to and because of us; they received handouts of clothes and food etc.

I have my ears closed so I cannot hear anymore-negative talk about me. I went to school with so many bruises on my legs and arms and buttocks from daily physical abuse with either sticks, whips, bamboo or flexible thin sticks that were more painful than straps.

I am dressed like an angel as I did not think I was as bad as they said I was and I have my fingers in my ears as I do not want to hear anymore abuse.

Milroy, Gladys: Gladys is an elder of the Palku people from Marble Bar in Western Australia. She was born in 1927, taken from her mother when she was two years old and placed in the Parkerville Children's Home run by the nuns of the Church of England. Gladys stayed there until she was 12. Gladys is a story teller and a poet and has five children, 14 grand children and one great grandchild.

Narkle, Harry and Jennifer: Harry and Jennifer live in Kulin, Western Australia.

Nelson, Susanne: Susanne is a Yorta Yorta woman. Susanne, her sister and two brothers were removed from their family in 1962 when she was 5 years old. Susanne grew up in the Lutheran Children's Home in Kew, Victoria.

'My returning to my family over the last 26 years has been too painful. I had to make the decision to walk away from my brothers and sisters this year. I am just worn out emotionally, physical and spiritually. Our lives were dramatically destroyed in one day. Do I think about my siblings? Yes. Everyday, and the warm bed that we will never have again.'

Nolan, David: David grew up in Bethcar Children's Home, Brewarrina.

Poetry: The poem 'Mission Breed' (pg 14) is about my life on the 'Mish', with the people I grew up with in the Home. The poem 'Your Spirit in my Hands' (pg 74) is about reconnection with my mother after getting out of the Home. Things would never be the same after learning of my mother's overdose.

Penny, Fred: Fred is a Nyoongar man and grew up on Wandering Mission.

'As a musician I contribute to the betterment of Aboriginal people and the awareness of non-Aboriginal people. My songs are driven by justice, equality and a fair go for all. I am always pleased to play alongside my son and always hope that it encourages our fathers and sons and mothers and daughters to do things together.'

Ridgeway, Les: Les was one of only three Aboriginal people in NSW to manage a mission station. He continues to fight for the rights of Aboriginal people in Australia, particularly in relation to the return of 'stolen wages' in NSW.

Roach, Vickie Lee: Vickie and her brother were taken from her mother when Vickie was 2 ½ years old and placed with separate families from the Church of Christ. Vickie's has been writing poetry and plays for many years. Her writings have been published and performed as plays, songs and performance pieces. In 2007 Vickie was awarded first prize in the Bridge Foundation's Literary Competition. While in prison in the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre in Victoria, Vickie completed a Masters of Writing through Swinburne University in 2006 and is currently writing her PhD. Vickie has also successfully challenged in the High Court Commonwealth legislation which prohibited prison inmates from voting.

Roberts, Kerrie: Kerrie is a Kamillaroi woman. She was adopted at six weeks old by lovely people. Kerrie found out she was Aboriginal when she was 12, but only began to pursue her Aboriginal heritage as an adult. She has two children and works as an Indigenous teacher's aide. The photograph shows Kerrie with some of her brothers and sisters. From left to right: Jason, Kerrie, Kevin, Joanne, Clancy and Della.

Robertson, Rooth: Rooth's family is from the Wiradjuri people. Rooth is an Aboriginal artist who has been searching for her family roots for 30 years. She has expressed her joy at finding her family in the artwork featured here, 'finding my Family.'

Rutty, Tim: Tim is a student at Sherbrook Community School in Victoria.

Stuurman, Robert: Robert Stuurman was born as John Ronald Cuttabut. He was adopted out to Dutch migrants in the 1960's and lived overseas in Holland and on Bougainville Island in the 1970's.

He came to Brisbane in 1992 and had a reunion with his mother Alma Toomath in 1994. This is where he was taught Aboriginal art and spirituality and has continued to express his culture through art practice. Robert also met his father in 2004 who was an English Orphan shipped out after WWII. He only met his father once.

Having both reunions has given Robert closure and acceptance of who he is and is an advocate for identity and social change using art as a medium. He is currently lecturing at the Queensland University of Technology in the Oodgeroo unit and is researching Aboriginal Art practice.

Thomas, Eddie: Eddie was stolen from Flinders Island and taken to a home on the Tasmanian mainland in a suburb of Launceston. He spent the next 18 years in a series of institutions.

Eddie thought it important to contribute to *Us Taken-Away Kids* in light of the positive events that had occurred within Tasmania in the last 12 months, specifically the passing of the Stolen Generations of Aboriginal Children Bill 2006 during 2006. He now works with the Tasmania Aboriginal Corporation assisting others in finding their families and working through the emotional difficulties associated with being a Stolen Child.

Toongerie AM, George: George was the first baby boy placed into care at Colebrook in South Australia; this was in 1926. George is the current Chairperson of the Aboriginal Lands Trust at Walkley Heights in South Australia.

George wanted to contribute to *Us Taken-Away Kids* because he has witnessed the damage done to people through the forced removal from their parents particularly in his interactions with the criminal justice system.

Turnbull, Elaine: Elaine is from the Gumbaynggirr community and grew up in the Coventry Church of England Girls Home. She is currently in her final year of a Bachelor of Adult Indigenous Education at the University of Technology, Sydney.

'My personal experience of huge trauma was and is ongoing. The healing process of still being conducted today. Even merely talking of my experience helps relieve pent up emotions and helps turn them into positive feelings. The journey may not work for everyone, however, I am convinced that by addressing the traumatic feelings the journey of healing begins.'

Williams- Mozley, John Ntjalka: The oldest of eight children, John was the first to be taken away from his mother, Mary Barbara Williams from Palm Valley, NT at the age of eight months old. John grew up in Charleston, in NSW. He did not find out he was adopted until the age of 9 where he then began the long search for his family. His determination and the help from people such as Mum Shirl saw him locate his mother, whom he spoke to for the first time when he was 27 years old. All of John's brothers and sisters were also removed, just as his mother had before them. Upon being reunited with his family, John's mother told him that she had never stopped believing he was alive. Today, John is a proud traditional owner of his family's country, Palm Valley, Ntaria.

Yarry, Lena: Lena and her sister Grace were taken and placed in the Toowoomba Girls Home for 5 years, then the Kulinna Girls Home for a year. They had a terrible time in the homes, and Lena tried to escape several times. Lena and Grace were never able to reconnect with their Aboriginal heritage, but an adult, Lena has stressed the importance of cultural knowledge to her children who are proud of their Aboriginal heritage. Lena particularly feels that it is important her children do not feel the anger and prejudice towards white Australia that she herself has felt for much of her early life- and it is the only way to move forward, 'you can't walk around with the prejudice, but you gotta teach the kids'. She is very proud of her children and has found some peace in finding her siblings. (Alfred Coolwell, listed above, is Lena's brother).

Your Spirit in My Hands

*I wish I knew the truth behind
Why you'd want to die
To end your life and leave your kids
For heaven in the sky
recall the seizures,
The comas night and day
The fear and expectation
Of you passing away
So many empty questions
No one to explain
The endless box of Bex powders
And valium for pain
Was it 'cause the welfare man
Took us all away?
Or your fathers' blaming you
For your brothers' death that day?
Someone out there knows the truth
That someone I must find
The reasons why you overdosed
Us out of your mind
A mother's love toward her kids
Vanished in the air
Taken captive by the drugs
That took her mind somewhere
No longer knowing family*

*Her daughter, her four sons
No longer feeling pain or love
For us or anyone
I cherish one small memory of you
In your fathers' yard
Sitting in Nan's rose garden
Concentrating hard
On crimson petals in your hand
A sketch pad lies in wait
Longing to embrace the image
Only you create*

*You're here with me in every way
In everything I do
I sense your spirit in my hands
When I start sketching too
My father taught me Koori culture
My identity
Mum you gave me all my talents
Creativity
For everything that I do
That I aspire to be
I draw from you, my heroine
You gave your strengths to me.*

- David Nolan Possum, Wiradjuri

To this day I believe my Mum and Dad died of a broken heart.

To find my family was a burden lifted off my shoulders.

I love my brothers and sister.

It gives me great sorrow my mum and dad never got to

He would make you feel at ease and so funny.

find my sister or me and I never met them.

Gee, just reminds me. I love his outgoing personality.

My older sister told me mum and dad never gave up

she was so glad she met her brothers and sisters

looking for their two stolen children.

before she passed on.

They passed on not knowing us.

