

Stolen Generations Advisory Committee Meeting 6 March 2018

Communique

The Stolen Generations Advisory Committee met in Sydney on 6 March 2018. This meeting followed a preparation meeting of Stolen Generations Organisations (SGO) representatives on 5 March, supported by the independent facilitation of Mr Grant Sarra.

The Stolen Generations survivor representatives met separately with Professor Megan Davis, to discuss the Independent Review into Aboriginal children in Out of Home Care prior to the Advisory Committee meeting.

During the meeting survivors and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Hon Sarah Mitchell, were able to discuss wide range of topics.

Discussions over the two days covered the following priority issues identified by the survivor representatives:

- Commonwealth Department of Health provided background information on aged care service packages delivered in conjunction with assessments conducted by NSW Aged Care Assessment Teams (ACAT).
- NSW School curriculum content delivering education on the Stolen Generations in the context of Aboriginal history and cultural awareness.
- The Independent review into Out of Home Care removal of Aboriginal children, currently being conducted by Professor Megan Davies and her team of researchers based at UNSW.
- Introduction of recently appointed Public Service Commission Aboriginal Senior Project Officer who will be involved in the development of the public sector workforce training package for culturally aware trauma informed capabilities.
- Issues, concerns and progress across a number of *Unfinished Business* commitments.

Progress Report on Unfinished Business to Parliament

The Committee meeting agenda focused on preparation of the progress report on the implementation of *Unfinished Business*, which is due to be tabled in Parliament in 2018.

The survivor representatives discussed the proposed format for the report on implementation and noted the progress information provided by agencies to Aboriginal Affairs. Survivors confirmed that in addition to progress reporting they wish to include in the report their feedback and priority concerns and issues moving forward.

The survivor representatives noted important progress has been made on implementation of Unfinished Business, however there are ongoing needs to review implementation in some areas, including the Reparations Scheme (and Funeral Assistance Fund). Further development is still required for some of the commitments and this will occur over the next two years.

The survivor representatives requested that the Advisory Committee be extended for an additional two years, to oversee the development and implementation of the remaining NSW Government commitments, and report again on progress and continue to provide advice to government over that timeframe.

Survivors raised a number of concerns around child protection, highlighted areas where survivors could play a support role in supporting family restoration, and sought a more formal and ongoing relationship with the Department of Family and Community Services to provide ongoing advice and support.

The Advisory Committee received an update on the Stolen Generations Reparations Scheme, including that as of 6 February 2018 over 970 applications have been received with 288 applications now finalised totally more than \$20 million in Reparations payments. Specific concerns were raised from survivors about eligibility requirements for the reparations scheme, related removals beyond the operation of the Board as well as the removal of Aboriginal children outside the timeframe of the legislation. Specific examples were highlighted concerning siblings and children who were removed from missions and reserves.

The survivor representatives noted further work is required with government representatives of Health and Ageing to access services at appropriate levels, and workforce capability for assessment and service delivery. Areas of concern included limited availability and long waiting times for aged care packages, the absence of a trauma informed approach and lack of workforce understanding of the Stolen Generations and intergenerational trauma, and cultural safety and competency concerns.

Information on Service Systems from Government Agencies

The survivor representatives wished to highlight that the information obtained from participating agencies does not always adequately address the questions raised by the Advisory Committee. The SGOs asked for clarifying information from the Commonwealth regarding the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) funding arrangements for Social and Emotional Wellbeing Counsellors in NSW, and in particular what the number of Social and Emotional Wellbeing Counsellors in NSW where these counsellors are located, and if there has there been any change in these numbers.

The survivors also noted ongoing difficulties with service delivery and access to trauma informed services. The level of support is not currently appropriate and it not meeting the needs of their members.

Sites of the Former Homes

In addition to the government's commitment to create a memorial at Central Station (as part of the precinct redevelopment) and a keeping place/museum based in Sydney, the SGO representatives expressed their wishes to have greater input over how the sites of the former homes are used. Representatives asked whether the government would consider options for survivors to have more control or ownership of the former sites.

Survivors Meeting with the Commonwealth Minister for Aged Care and Indigenous Health

Minister Wyatt was unable to attend the Advisory Committee meeting but will meet with survivor representative's out-of-session in April.