

Stolen Generations Advisory Committee Meeting

1 October 2019

Communique

The Stolen Generations Advisory Committee met in Sydney on 1 October 2019. This meeting followed a preparation meeting with Stolen Generations Organisations (SGO) representatives in the week commencing 9 September which was independently facilitated by Mr Grant Sarra. SGOs also held out-of-session discussions with several government agencies to discuss the progress of various commitments relating to the Government's response to Unfinished Business.

At the Stolen Generations Advisory Committee meeting Stolen Generation survivor's met with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Hon Don Harwin, and took the opportunity to discuss their organisations and to outline some current issues that are important for survivors and their descendants. The broad range of issues included; the high costs of funerals particularly for those who wish to return to Country, survivor's aspirations for the conservation and use of sites of the former Aborigines Welfare Board homes as museums and educational centres, additional support including counselling and funding for social and emotional wellbeing practitioners for SGOs, the need for trauma informed aged care facilities and home care packages for survivor's, concerns about housing for survivors and their families and investment opportunities to attain home ownership.

Government agencies provided brief updates on work being progressed on Unfinished Business commitments. The Committee also discussed the following agenda issues.

Aboriginal Housing

Survivor's described the importance of having stable, appropriate housing available for survivors and their families, to support their needs and maintain wellbeing, and to provide options for aged care in the home. Survivor's discussed their concerns regarding housing affordability and limited opportunities to achieve home ownership, recommending that additional options be addressed for cross-generation home ownership. The Aboriginal Housing Office outlined recent research on home ownership in their sector and explained culturally appropriate housing options are being further considered in the NSW AHO housing strategy. Stolen Generations Organisations reminded the Aboriginal Housing Office representatives that survivors also are accommodated through community housing providers, housing strategies need to develop options more broadly and invest across the housing sector. The Aboriginal Housing Office have committed to deliver presentations for the Stolen Generations Organisations about the Services Our Way program and provided contact details for SGOs to contact the team directly when needed.

Family and Community Services

Family and Community Services has moved into the Department of Communities and Justice due to the restructure of NSW government agencies clusters. Survivor's requested an update about the re-alignment of services and policies. Families and Community representative agreed to invite a colleague from the Aboriginal Services Unit to discuss the new interaction in the Department of Communities and Justice.

Sites of former Aborigines Welfare Board (AWB) Homes and Keeping Places

There are several Unfinished Business recommendations relating to the significance of sites of former Aboriginal children's homes associated with the former Aborigines Welfare

Board. There are complex issues associated with the future use of these heritage listed sites. Unfinished Business makes recommendations regarding memorials, keeping places and healing centres and future aspirations for the sites need to be properly considered along with the interests of all stakeholders. A working group of relevant government agencies has been established to advise on some of these issues in the context of Unfinished Business commitments. The Minister added that Heritage and the Arts will participate in the 'former sites working group' and that the working group should be well positioned to assist with ongoing issues regarding the KBHAC site. The working group will be providing regular update reports to the Minister as discussions progress with stakeholders.

Issues Relating to Commonwealth Government Responsibility

Survivor's explained their concerns that a roundtable discussion with SGO's relating to Commonwealth government responsibilities and service delivery had not occurred in the timeframe previously agreed to at the May 2019 meeting. Commonwealth Government representatives agreed this would be arranged for December 2019 for Commonwealth service delivery agencies and the National Indigenous Australians Agency to discuss Unfinished Business with Stolen Generations survivors. The roundtable discussion will address Health and Aged Care priorities, service access and costs and will also discuss the Stolen Generations survivor's request for a health care card.

Ministry of Health Roundtable

NSW Ministry of Health held a two day roundtable discussion with Stolen Generations Organisations in September 2019. NSW Health committed to update the Stolen Generations Organisations on next steps for prioritisation of services delivered by NSW and to speak with the Commonwealth representatives on the commitment to progress a joint roundtable discussion on matters that cross government jurisdictions.

National Redress Scheme

The Stolen Generations Organisations requested clarification about the impact of previous payments made to survivors under the Stolen Generations Group Action and applications being made to the National Redress Scheme for people who experienced institutional child sexual abuse. The Department of Communities and Justice have committed to producing a fact sheet which will address these issues.

Survivor representatives asked whether people who suffered sexual abuse as children on Missions would be eligible for redress. Survivor representatives were informed advice will need to be sought on this matter.

Trauma Informed Workforce Development

The Public Service Commission updated Stolen Generations Organisations on the drafting of training modules for the Unfinished Business trauma informed workforce training package. Aboriginal company, Mirri Mirri has been engaged to develop this work as on-line training modules and to work with SGO's to develop suitable content, including the survivor's stories about their experience and history of the homes.