

**Stolen Generations Advisory Committee Meeting  
18 June 2018**

**Communique**

The Stolen Generations Advisory Committee met in Sydney on 18 June 2018. This meeting followed a preparation meeting of Stolen Generations Organisations (SGO) representatives on 4-5 June, supported by the independent facilitation of Mr Grant Sarra.

During the meeting between survivors and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Hon Sarah Mitchell, a range of topics were discussed. This included concerns about the Reparations Scheme payment amount, which will never fully compensate survivors for the harm and trauma survivors experienced. Additionally, the survivor representatives expressed concerns about the eligibility criteria for the Stolen Generations Reparations Scheme, including that Aboriginal children who were removed solely by the former Child Welfare Department are ineligible for the Reparations Scheme.

The survivor representatives reiterated the importance of collective healing, including that understanding of the history of the Stolen Generations needs to be promoted in regional areas, and local healing approaches developed. Aboriginal Affairs advised these types of initiatives can be considered under the Stolen Generations Healing Fund.

**NSW child protection issues**

The Committee heard from Mr Michael Coutts-Trotter, Secretary, Department of Family and Community Services (FACS), on the child protection reforms FACS is undertaking. Mr Coutts-Trotter outlined the significant reduction of Aboriginal children being taken into care in the past two years. However, he reiterated that FACS is aware it needs to do better, and is committed to working alongside Aboriginal communities to continue reducing the rates of Aboriginal children who are removed from their families.

Mr Coutts-Trotter heard directly from the survivor representatives on their views and concerns on the child protection system in NSW. These included that the NSW Stolen Generations Organisations (SGOs) have an important role to play in supporting family restoration, and should be resourced by FACS to do this work. The survivor representatives also raised concerns about the maturity and life experience of child protection workers, and seek input into the training packages for these workers.

Mr Coutts-Trotter agreed to the request for a two day workshop between SGO representatives and decision-makers across FACS, to discuss work occurring across FACS on child protection issues. The workshop will provide a forum to work together to form solutions and to establish a direct and ongoing relationship between the SGOs and FACS.

**Social and Emotional Wellbeing Counsellors**

The survivor representatives raised concerns with the Commonwealth about the design and implementation of the Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) Program.

They highlighted that programs aimed at Stolen Generations survivors need to be delivered by, or in close consultation with, the SGOs. To do this, the SGOs should be adequately resourced to deliver SEWB programs for survivors and by survivors, which should include operational funding as well as SEWB counsellor/program funding.

The survivor representatives highlighted the importance of the Commonwealth taking a healing approach in the way it works with survivors, in recognition of the impact of the trauma experienced by SGO Board members.

The Commonwealth committed that PM&C will meet with all SGOs separately to discuss any current funding arrangements in place with the individual SGOs or to explain the application process for Indigenous Advancement Strategy funding.

In addition, PM&C will arrange a meeting with all four SGOs together, to discuss policy or design issues for the SEWB program.

### **National Redress Scheme for people who experienced institutional child sexual abuse**

The NSW Department of Justice provided the Committee with broad information on the National Redress Scheme for people who experienced child sexual abuse. The Committee was advised that the Redress Scheme will commence on 1 July 2018, with payments of up to \$150,000 available. These payments will be based on an assessment of the individual circumstances, including the type of abuse experienced and the institution(s) responsible. The Committee was advised that whilst Reparations Scheme payments will not impact payments under the Redress Scheme, any legal settlements that were paid for the same injuries being claimed under the Redress Scheme will be taken into account when determining payment amounts.

The SGOs requested a factsheet be created to provide information for Stolen Generations survivors in NSW to help them understand the Redress Scheme and how it interacts with the Reparations Scheme and the Stolen Generations Group Action.

### **Aged Care and Health**

The NSW Department of Health is undertaking research to identify areas the NSW Government can influence regarding the health or aged care needs of survivors. NSW Health offered to meet with individual SGOs should they wish, to better understand issues survivors are facing when accessing these services.

### **FACS cultural capability training**

FACS is delivering Aboriginal cultural capability training for FACS staff that is tailored for each local area, and has been designed in consultation with local community groups and elders. FACS has offered for the SGOs to have input as the training is rolled out.