

Stolen Generations Advisory Committee Meeting 29 May 2017

Communique

The first meeting of the Stolen Generations Advisory Committee was convened on 29 May 2017. The Committee, reporting to the Premier and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, includes two representatives from each of the four Stolen Generations survivor organisations in NSW.

The discussions focussed on the current status of the NSW Government's response to Unfinished Business, the forward agenda and the Committee's operating and membership arrangements.

Stolen Generations Reparations Scheme

The Committee noted that the NSW Stolen Generations Reparations Scheme is on-track to commence on 1 July 2017, and that in the meantime fast-tracked claims for people involved in the Aborigines Welfare Board Group Action are being processed. Three Independent Assessors have been appointed by the Governor of NSW to provide independent recommendations to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs on applications under the Scheme. The Independent Assessors have a detailed understanding of the practices and policies of the Aborigines Welfare Board and bring expertise in a broad range of areas including legal and Australian history. The Department of Social Services and the Australian Tax Office have officially confirmed that payments under the Scheme will not affect any Centrelink payments and will not be taxed.

20 year commemoration to Bringing Them Home and memorials

The Committee noted the commemoration of the 20 year anniversary of *Bringing Them Home* in NSW Parliament on 25 May 2017. The Committee also noted other Sorry Day events held within communities, including the La Perouse memorial event and the candlelight vigil ending at Platform 1 Central Station held on 26 May 2017.

Aborigines Welfare Board records

The Committee noted that a review of access to the records of the former Aborigines Welfare Board and Chief Secretary had commenced. The review will aim to improve access to non-sensitive records, while retaining important restrictions on records that contain personal and sensitive information. The review will also explore how the stories of survivor's can sit alongside the Board's records to ensure the voices of survivors are included on the record.

Out of home care reforms

The Committee noted current work on the review of all cases of Aboriginal children in out of home care. The Committee asked to be kept updated on the progress of the review and for more to be done to support prevention and early intervention, including engaging families early, especially where Stolen Generations descendants are involved.

Housing reforms

The Committee noted current reforms concerning Aboriginal social housing aimed at increasing flexibility to meet the needs of Aboriginal people impacted by disadvantage, including Stolen Generations survivors. It was highlighted that aged-care support needs to be factored into these approaches.

Aged care, health care and repatriation of survivors incarcerated overseas

The Committee noted that more work was needed to progress actions involving the Commonwealth Government, especially those in relation to health and aged care services. In relation to Stolen Generations survivors incarcerated overseas, the Department of Justice undertook to report back to the Advisory Committee on what areas the NSW Government can influence regarding the incarceration of overseas survivors, given this is a Commonwealth responsibility. The Commonwealth representative will also follow up to see whether can provide some advice on these matters.

Advisory Committee terms of reference

The Committee reviewed their Terms of Reference and will consider arrangements for a permanent Chair out of session. The Committee agreed that subject matter experts would attend meetings as required and that they may identify additional agencies to participate on an ad hoc basis.

Closing

The Committee agreed that it would issue a Communique following each meeting to ensure survivors, government and other stakeholders are kept abreast of its deliberations.