



# *Saying Sorry:* Resource for Catholic Schools

Religious Education Team  
Brisbane Catholic Education



*"If you have come here to help me,  
you are wasting your time.....  
But if you have come because  
your liberation is bound up with mine,  
then let us work together."*

Lilla Watson, Brisbane based Aboriginal educator and activist

*On Wednesday 13 February 2008, at the first sitting of the new parliamentary year, the Prime Minister will say sorry to the stolen generation on behalf of the Australian Parliament.*

*This resource provides some ideas and suggestions on how school communities might commemorate this event.*

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# Sorry



*I will heal them; I will  
lead them and repay  
them with comfort (Is  
57:18)*

Staff Prayer  
Saying Sorry Day  
2008

**Song: Hands of Healing** (*Marty Haugen taken from "The Song and the Silence"*)

*Saying Sorry: Joining people all over Australia, we remember the hurt inflicted onto our Indigenous brothers and sisters and commit ourselves to reconciliation.*

*We acknowledge the Traditional Owners/Custodians who have cared for this land for thousands of years. We also acknowledge their descendants who maintain spiritual connections and traditions.*

*Let us reflect together, before we pray, on the millions of footprints that have travelled the Dreaming pathways and our own loved ones who have gone before us.*

*Brisbane Justice and peace Commission and Toowoomba Social Justice Commission and Aboriginal Partners*

### **Opening Prayer:**

Let us pray,  
God of Justice,  
We come to seek your guidance, wisdom and compassion  
As we pray for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have been wronged in the past.  
May our hearts be open to receive your healing grace,  
So that we in turn bring healing to each other.

We ask this prayer through Christ, our Lord,

**All: AMEN**

### **Reading: Matthew 5:3-11**

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

This is a reading of the Good News

**ALL: Thanks be to God.**

### **Reflection**

Reader:

Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> February marks a significant event for all Australians. Our Federal parliament will be saying sorry to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were so wronged in the past. We here today focus on the healing dimension of reconciliation and remember the suffering of the indigenous people. We come to say sorry and truly work together to make amends. We recognise that true healing starts by making amends, not in isolation, but by all Australians coming together in compassion and love. Today we come united as we pray to God, who will heal our wounds, and free us to love and show compassion, justice and peace to all.

**Song: The Cry of the Poor: (Taken from J. Foley. Gather Australia: Singing the Liturgy: As One Voice (1))**

Participants are asked to write their own thoughts and prayers onto their healing hands. These are then placed around the sacred space. See healing hands resource at end of this staff prayer)

**Together we pray the Lord's Prayer (taken from the Koenpal Stradbroke Island People)**

Brisbane Justice and Peace Commission and Toowoomba Social Justice commission and Aboriginal Partners  
Provided by Evelyn Parkin and Kerry Charlton

**(Unite hands)**

Our father  
Who stop up there  
Your name is good  
Come down to us  
We do here what  
They do up there

Today give us bread  
Forgive us this time  
Don't lead us to do wrong  
Take us away from bad  
You are great, all is yours.  
Forever

Let us turn to God in prayer for what we need to be true followers of Jesus

**Reader 1:**

*God of justice,*

We pray that all Australians recognise the hurts of our past that have been inflicted on our Indigenous brothers and sisters. May we learn from our mistakes and act with justice and compassion as we work towards equality and justice for all people.

For this we pray.....

**ALL: In unity, God hear our prayer.**

**Reader 2:**

*God of comfort,*

We pray for reconciliation and compassion and the grace to move forward together in peace.

For this we pray....

**ALL: In unity, God hear our prayer.**

**Reader 3:**

*God of fairness*

We pray that Australians act with fairness and justice towards Indigenous Australians.

May we bring comfort to those who are suffering and healing love to those whose lives have been shattered broken.

For this we pray.....

**ALL: In unity, God hear our prayer.**

**Reader 4:**

*God of community,*

We pray for the human community: that we will continue to nurture our relationships with you, our Creator God, with one another and with all creation.

For this we pray....

**ALL: In unity, God hear our prayer.**

**Reader 5:**

*God of reconciliation and mercy,*

We pray for ourselves as followers of Jesus: that we will build reconciling and inclusive communities to which people are drawn and have a strong sense of belonging.

For this we pray....

**ALL: In unity, God hear our prayer.**

**Reader 6:**

*God of the marginalised,*

We pray for all Christians: that we will cultivate a deep awareness of, and commitment to, social justice and social welfare by hearing and answering the cry of the poor and outcast in our local communities.

For this we pray.....

**ALL: In unity, God hear our prayer.**

**Concluding Prayer**

**Leader:**

Loving God,

You who created all people in your image and likeness,

May we listen with care to all all people of this land and treat all with respect

Source of all creation and unity, bless us in our endeavours to live as one in Christ.

**ALL: Amen.**

May you our God of justice, give us the strength and courage to transform the world according to the vision of Jesus.

**ALL: Amen.**

May you our God, model of community and equality, inspire us to bring harmony and a new vision of reconciliation to all.

**ALL: Amen.**

And may almighty God bless you,  
the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit.

**ALL: Amen.**

**Song: A new heart for a new world**

Trisha watts/ M. O'Brien Gather Australia As One Voice (1)

**Chorus:**

Create a new heart holy Lord,

Beckon our lives through your word,

Open our eyes to your call,

United as one, for your world.

Heighten our minds to your thoughts,

Heal of pride, and of hurt

May we go forth in your name, we pray our hearts change.

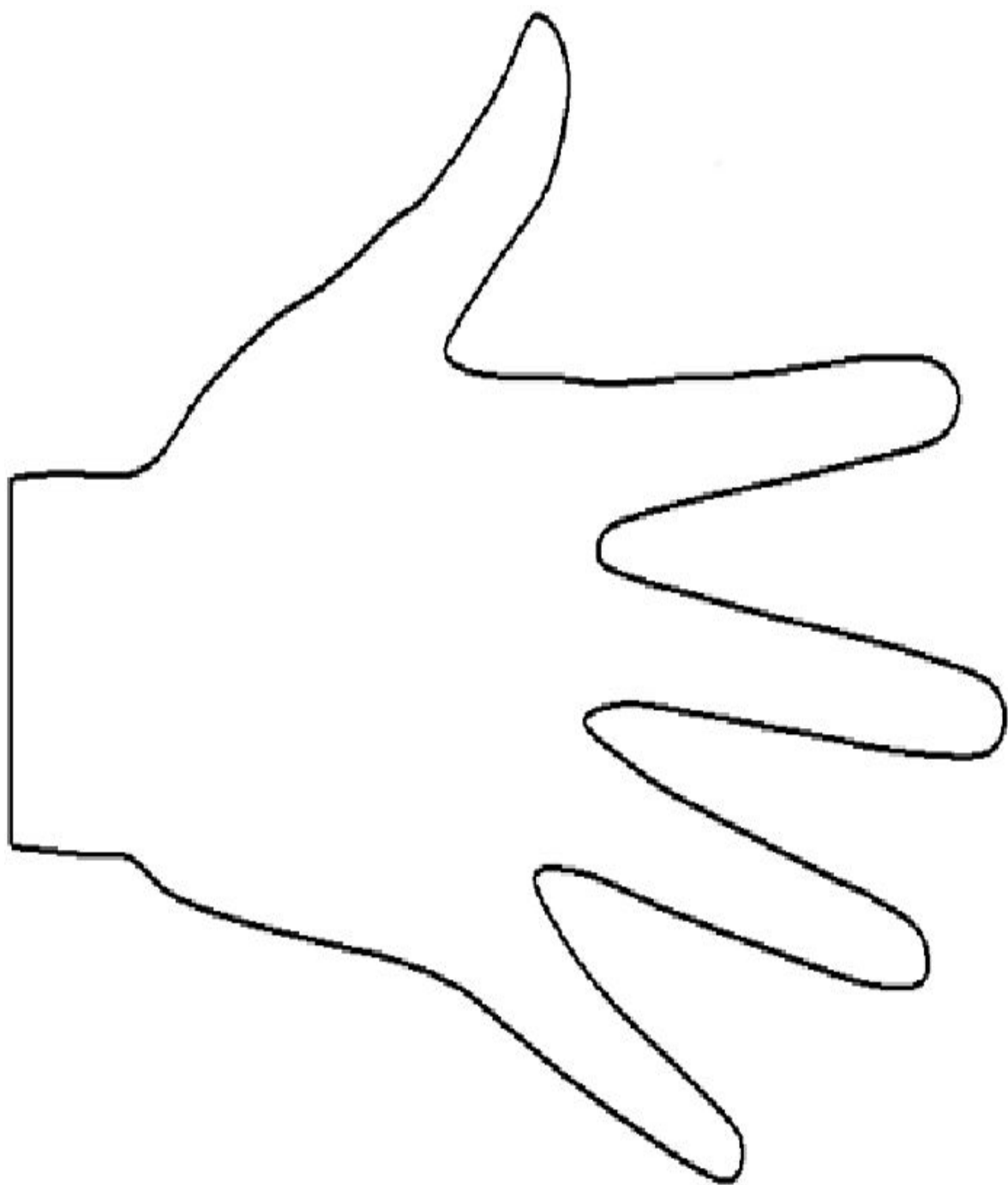
The heart of the cross, lowly and poor, calls us on.

Lord, it is you promising hope, promising truth.

**Chorus**

Restless the hearts who yearn for your peace in this land.

Deepen the dream, justice brings life, justice redeems.







# Saying Sorry Prayer Ritual for Students

Religious Education Team, Brisbane Catholic Education.

## We Gather

*Students gather in silence, coming together as a slow drum/gong beat is sounded.  
Alternatively reflective music could be used.*

*Use the data show provided with this resource to accompany the opening prayer or alternatively simply have the prayer read if conducted outside.*

## Opening Prayer

*(Change data show slides where indicated by \*)*

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| Reader One   | God of all creation,<br>*We who have come from every land give thanks for Australia;<br>This earth that feeds us;<br>The shores that bind us;<br>The skies that envelop us in freedom.  |
| Reader Two   | *We stand together, united as one people;<br>Proud of our ability to work together;<br>*Grateful for our gifts;<br>Nourished by our diversity and our harmony.  |
| Reader Three | *Yet we turn to the original owners of our land, and see, too,<br>what has been taken from them.<br>*We weep for their loss of freedom, of country, of children -<br>even of their very lives.<br>We stand in awe at their survival and in debt for their land.<br>*We have shadows in our history which if unfaced diminish us.<br>We have taken without asking;<br>our nation has taken without asking;<br>Lives are wounded. We see the pain, feel the sorrow and we<br>say sorry. |
| Reader Four  | *Let us look back with courage, see the truth and speak it.<br>Let us look around with compassion; see the cost and share it.<br>*Let us look forward with hope; see what can be and create it.<br>Give us courage to face the 'truth'<br>Compassion to share the burden -<br>Strength to play our part in the healing -<br>And hope to walk forward to a place of justice.   |

With courage, compassion, strength and hope,  
We will walk together on the journey of healing.

**ALL**                    **We will walk together on this journey of healing.**

## **We Listen**

Reader Five            A reading adapted from the book of Isaiah.

Here are my servants whom I uphold, my chosen ones with whom I am pleased. Upon them I have put my spirit; they shall bring forth justice to the nations,

Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spreads out the earth with its crops, Who gives breath to its people and spirit to those who walk on it:

I, the Lord, have called you to be agents of justice, I have grasped you by the hand; I formed you, and set you as a covenant of the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners from confinement, and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness.

This is the Word of the Lord.

**ALL**                    **Thanks be to God.**

## **We Respond**

*In response to the message of the reading, students, staff and parents are invited to proclaim an adapted penitential rite and to offer a sign of peace.*

Reader Six            Compassionate God, our community is gathered here in your name. Today we recall the great sadness carried by so many people who belong to the stolen generation. We say sorry and in doing so, we acknowledge their grief with empathy and compassion.

For those times we have made other feel less worthy than ourselves –

**ALL**                    **We say sorry.**

Reader Six            For the times we have judged others without really trying to understand how they might be feeling.

**ALL**                    **We say sorry.**

Reader Six            For the times we have been impatient, selfish or thoughtless  
with others.

**ALL**                    **We say sorry.**

Reader Six            Let us now offer each other a sign of God's peace.

*Sign of peace might be shaking hands with others, a song or some other simple  
ritual action.*

**We Go**

Suitable piece of music or slow drum beat for silent return to class.

Some simple suggestions for commemorating the *Saying Sorry* event on 13 February:

- Use your school sign to proclaim your school's support. A suitable phrase to use might be  
*The staff and students of St \_\_\_\_\_ say sorry*  
*The journey of healing begins today*
- *Create a simple Penitential Rite that might be used at a school assembly or in classroom settings. Here is a simple one you could use or adapt:*
- *Fly the Aboriginal flag and Torres Strait Island flag*
- *Gather students for a small period of silent reflection*
- *Set up a bank of computers so that students are able to go to the "Sea of Hands" website where they add their hand in support of aboriginal reconciliation. Suitable for secondary students.*  
<http://seaofhands.antar.org.au/normal>
- *Students might come dressed in the Aboriginal (black, red and yellow) and Torres Strait colours: (blue, green and white)*
- *Create a wall of hands. Students cut out around their hand, write a prayer of penance and place it on a wall. This can be integrated with the class unit on lent.*
- *Listen to the Prime Minister's speech on television and form discussion circles after viewing it.*

## *Some easily accessible resources:*

- An excellent *You Tube* video on the Stolen Generation (54 seconds):  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KzpsBqwCQqE>
- Another excellent *You Tube* video that would be very suitable for use in a simple prayer ritual. Very moving music and images.  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NL\\_OnGjulmk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NL_OnGjulmk)
- Links to personal stories of the stolen generation can be accessed at the Trinity Catholic College website (Western Australia):  
<http://www.trinity.wa.edu.au/plduffyrc/indig/stolen.htm>
- A Fact Sheet on the Stolen Generation suitable for Upper primary and Secondary students:  
<http://www.racismnoway.com.au/classroom/factsheets/52.html>
- An excellent Aboriginal Studies WebQuest based on the issue of whether the Australian government should say *sorry*.  
<http://www.teachers.ash.org.au/wattle/abstuds/>

## Quote Bank

"Sorry is the most important word because it has great meaning in our community, it means having empathy and compassion and understanding."

**Christine King, Stolen Generation Alliance, 2008**

"It's a moment that all Australians should feel incredibly proud of, that we're recognising the mistakes of the past, acknowledging them, and moving forward together, indigenous and non-indigenous people side-by-side."


**Christine King, Stolen generation Alliance, 2008**

"The apology will be made on behalf of the Australian government and does not attribute guilt to the current generation of Australian people."

**Jenny Macklin, Indigenous Affairs Minister, 2008**

**A moving selection of personal stories, short quotes from members of the Stolen generation can be accessed at:**

[http://www.tki.org.nz/r/socialscience/curriculum/SSOL/generation/quotes\\_e.php](http://www.tki.org.nz/r/socialscience/curriculum/SSOL/generation/quotes_e.php)



A “Sorry Day” will be held exactly a year after the tabling in Federal Parliament of *Bringing Them Home*, the Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families. The Report reveals the extent of the forced removal, which went on for more than 150 years; its consequences in terms of broken families, shattered physical and mental health, loss of language, culture and connection to traditional land and the enormous distress of many of its victims today. The ongoing legacy continues today.

That there was a systematic policy by State, Territory and Federal governments to separate Indigenous Australian children from their families must be acknowledged and understood by all Australians before healing can commence.

The “Sorry Day”, recommended in *Bringing Them Home*, provides the opportunity for all Australians to express their sorrow at the tragic events spanning such a long time of our shared history and, then, to celebrate the beginning of a new understanding. The wider Australian community is being invited to remember those affected by removal, so that the nation can continue the process of healing together. Indigenous people will participate in the day dedicated to the memory of loved ones who have never come home or are still finding their way home.

“Sorry Day” will be an important step on the road all Australians are ‘walking together’.

## AIM OF THIS PACKAGE:

*To provide ideas for all Australians to express a meaningful response and make a personal commitment to acknowledge and understand the events, and the ongoing implications, surrounding the 'Stolen Generations' of Australia's Indigenous Peoples on "Sorry Day" 1998.*

**There are many resources, many ways to express a commitment and many other ways in which the “stolen generations” can be honoured and acknowledged within the wider Australian population. These are a few simple ideas to indicate what is possible.**

**While these activities are aimed at one day, the events and issues surrounding the “stolen generations” should be considered, discussed, and reflected upon by all Australians for always.**

### EARLY CHILDHOOD, AGES 4 - 8:

- 📖 Invite an Indigenous parent/community member into the pre-school or school to speak with the children. Talk to this person beforehand, be familiar with what they will say and remember sometimes guest speakers need a small payment for travel and their time.
- 📖 Read a Dreaming story which includes families as part of its content.
- 📖 Discuss, draw, paint, etc ideas about families.
- 📖 Read *PILA WUK: When I was Young* by Janeen Brian ( a Magic Bean Book Published by Era Publications, 1996). Also available in a Big Book. Talk with the children about the content and the events.
- 📖 Tell the children what happened to young Indigenous children and that they were separated from their families. (While being aware of the children's ability to deal with the issue of separation they will be able to cope with a certain amount of the history.)
- 📖 Have children cut out the shape of their hand on some coloured paper or card and write a message they would share with their family, friends, classmates, removed Indigenous people and/or other Australians. If the family or teacher is attending other 'Sorry Day' functions these hands could be taken along for display.
- 📖 Either during a flag raising, the flag (s) could be at half mast for part of the day, or at some other appropriate time of the day have a minute's silence in honour of the “Stolen Generations”.

### MIDDLE/UPPER PRIMARY SCHOOL AGE, AGES 9 - 12:

- 📖 Invite an Indigenous parent/community member into the school to speak with the children. Talk to this person beforehand, be familiar with what they will say and remember sometimes guest speakers need a small payment for travel and their time. Have the students respond in a variety of media. Writing a poem, a story, doing some art work, etc.
- 📖 Read at least one story from the *Bringing Them Home* Report. **Full Report** available through Australian Government Publishing Services. **Summary Document** available through Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Sydney ph: (02) 9284 9600
- 📖 Have the students respond in a variety of media. Writing a poem, a story, doing some art work, etc.
- 📖 Have students 'place themselves in the shoes' of someone being taken away, of someone watching the event, of the parents and so on. Be sure to debrief students.
- 📖 Again, draw or paint the scene.





- 📖 View extracts from the videos “Lousy Little Sixpence” (available from libraries Resource Centres or Ronin Films, Canberra, phone (02) 6248 0851), “It’s a Long Road Back” (available from Libraries, Resource Centres and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra, phone (02) 6246 1111).
- 📖 View some of the photos in the *Bringing Them Home* Report or summary document and have students analyse and discuss them.
- 📖 *The Burnt Stick*, Anthony Hill, Viking, Ringwood, 1994. A great resource!!!
- 📖 Prepare a statement to write in the “Sorry Book”.
- 📖 Relevant extracts from the *Bringing Them Home* Report can be found on **pages 27, 50, 204 and 249**. Other important extracts appear throughout the report.
- 📖 Have children cut out the shape of their hand on some coloured paper or card and write a message they would share with their family, friends, classmates, removed Indigenous people and/or other Australians. If the family or teacher is attending other ‘Sorry Day’ functions these hands could be taken along for display.
- 📖 Either during a flag raising, the flag (s) could be at half mast for part of the day, or at some other appropriate time of the day have a minute’s silence in honour of the “Stolen Generations”.


## SECONDARY SCHOOL AGE AND ADULTS:


- 📖 Invite an Indigenous parent/community member into the school or office setting to speak with the students or colleagues. Talk to this person beforehand, be familiar with what they will say and remember sometimes guest speakers need a small payment for travel and their time.
- 📖 Watch the *Bringing them Home* video (available through libraries, Resource Centres or purchased at ABC Shops).
- 📖 Read or photocopy for your group sections of the *Bringing Them Home* Report and/or summary document concerning:
  - mothers and their children;
  - government policies; and
  - police and welfare.
- 📖 **Put yourselves in the shoes** of the different participants in a ‘separation situation’. The responses could be oral, written, drawn or painted, enacted and so on. Debrief students.
- 📖 Cut out the shape of your hand on some coloured paper or card and write a message you would share with your family, friends, classmates, removed Indigenous people and/or other Australians. Bring it along to other “Sorry Day” activities.
- 📖 Set up a debate or a mock court to discuss questions such as:
  - Were the various government policies to separate Indigenous children from their families genocide?
  - Do the ‘Stolen generations’ continue today? Discuss the extreme levels of Indigenous peoples’ incarceration, especially among Indigenous juveniles/adolescents.
  - Should the Federal Parliament of Australia apologise to the ‘Stolen Generations’?
  - Many other questions may come to mind. **Please discuss them!**
- 📖 Students prepare a statement for entry into a “Sorry Book”.
- 📖 Separation policies continued after the 1967 Referendum. See *Bringing Them Home Report*, page 425.
- 📖 Good summaries of the State/Territory Government Policies/Acts of Parliament are on pages 254 and 261 of the *Bringing Them Home Report*.
- 📖 Fuller documentation of the above are available on pages 600 to 648 of the same document. An Internet site: [www.hreoc.gov.au](http://www.hreoc.gov.au) see “Stolen children” section.
- 📖 Important extracts from the *Bringing Them Home* Report can be found on **pages 27, 50, 204 and 249**. Other relevant extracts appear throughout the report.
- 📖 Important submissions to the National Inquiry can be found on:
  - Jennifer’s submission - pp 52 to 55;
  - John’s submission - pp 166 to 167; and
  - William’s submission - pp 371 to 372.
- 📖 The issue of Indigenous children separated from their families and taken overseas must be addressed. See a short description of Russell Moore’s lifestory on pages 369, 370 and 471 of the *Bringing Them*

**Home Report.** Listen to the song “Muntjana” by Archie Roach on his ‘Charcoal Lane’ album. A tragic revelation!!!

 Other international removals are discussed on page 243 of the Report. How should this issue be dealt with?

 *The Burnt Stick*, Anthony Hill, Viking, Ringwood, 1994. A great resource!!!

 *The Stolen Generations*, Carmel Bird, 1998. Contains stories, policies and commentary.

 Either during a flag raising, the flag (s) could be at half mast for part of the day, or at some other appropriate time of the day have a minute’s silence in honour of the “Stolen Generations”.

## SOME OTHER RESOURCES TO USE

### TEXT

- *Bringing Them Home*, the Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Indigenous Children from Their Families.
- *Bringing Them Home*, a summary document of the complete Report.
- *The Girl Who Was Taken Away From Her Family* by Selma Sampson Nampijinpa in Aboriginal Short Stories No 32, Pascoe Publishing, 1990. This is a short play suitable for school children and small groups to perform.
- *Being Aboriginal - Comments, Observations and Stories from Aboriginal Australia* by Ros Bowden and Bill Bunbury ABC Books, 1990.
- *If Everyone Cared* by Margaret Tucker, Grosvenor Books, 1983.
- *The Lost Children*, Coral Edwards and Peter Read (Eds), Doubleday, Moorebank 1989. 13 Australians taken from their Aboriginal families tell of their struggle to find their natural parents.
- *Inside Black Australia*, Kevin Gilbert (ed), Penguin 1988. For example,
  - A Letter to My Mother by Eva Johnson;
  - Mary's Plea by Daisy Utemorrah;
  - Torn Apart by Pam Tjanara Williams; and
  - Kidnappers by Iris Clayton.
- *The Stolen Generation: 1883 - 1969*, Peter Read, a small publication of the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Sydney phone (02) 9290 8700.
- *This Whispering in the Our Hearts*, Henry Reynolds, Allen and Unwin, 1998. Just Released.

### SONG

- *My Brown Skin Baby*, Bobby Randell. Very difficult to find an original copy to purchase. A version of the song appears as the final unlisted live track on the Tiddas album "Sing About Life" distributed through Mercury/Polygram records.
- *They Took the Children Away*, Archie Roach - from the album "Charcoal Lane" distributed through Mushroom Records @ \$ 19.95.
- *Sorry*, Goanna - CD Single, Big Heart Productions, contact Helene Jedwab ph/fax (03) 5562 4030, @ 5.00 plus \$ 2.50 postage.
- *Sorry Song*, Kerry Fletcher and the Coexistence Singers - a CD Single available through People to People in Harmony, W A, phone (08) 9266 3928.
- Many other songs, especially by Indigenous artists, would be suitable to use.

### VIDEO

- *Bringing Them Home*, a video summary of aspects of the Report. A 32 minute production available through ABC Shops. You will need to order a copy which takes about 2 weeks. An excellent resource for persons over 12 years of age.
- *Lousy Little Sixpence*, a 52 minute video which provides archival footage and great detail concerning the removal of Indigenous children from their families. Available from libraries, resource centres and Ronin Films, Canberra. Suitable for persons over 10 years of age.
- *Its A Long Road Back*, a 12 minute video produced by AIATSIS, Canberra concerning Margaret Tucker's story.
- *Who Killed Malcolm Smith*, a 50 minute video, Film Australia, phone (02) 9413 8634.
- *The Secret Country*, John Pilger's famous 50 minute film available through Ronin Films.

## VISIT

- Arrange a visit to a site of significance in your local region. The site may be related to the ‘Stolen Generations’ or may be an important place to remember and reflect upon Indigenous Australia - the sorrows and the victories.

*The Tent Embassy in Canberra* situated between the Southern end of Lake Burley Griffin and Old Parliament House. Many ‘Stolen Generations’ issues can be talked through there.

Let our hands be hands of healing,

Let our words be clear and true,

In our work God's love revealing,

Just and gentle in all we do

Touch the ones who sorrow: hands of healing

Hope beyond all grieving: clear and true,

Sing the God of mercy: love revealing,

Just and gently in all we do.

Free the ones in bondage: hands of healing,

Bring the Reign of new hope; clear and true,

Sing the God of freedom: love revealing,

Just and gentle in all we do

Safely lead the young ones: hands of healing,

Bring your joy and laughter: clear and true,

Sing the God of children: love revealing,

Just and gentle in all we do

## Saying Sorry: Some ideas for Music Hotlinks

### ***Reconciliation - stories of the heart, sounds of the rock***

an excellent CD and study guide from Caritas, Catholic Mission and ANTaR- that should be in your library. The CD is a soundscape of music and words, featuring music from Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists including Midnight Oil, Wendy Matthews, Yothu Yindi and Paul Kelly. Free accompanying study guide can be [downloaded](#).

### ***Burraay Dreaming Them Home CD - definitely Secondary resource*** ***Listen to the Spirit -Shades of Brindle CD***

These two CD's can be purchased on the Journey of Healing site with an outline of material

<http://home.alphalink.com.au/~rez/Journey/publications.htm>

### **One People, One Land** by Monica Brown

### ***I KNOW THAT THESE ARE IN OUR Library***

### ***Reconciliation - stories of the heart, sounds of the rock***

an excellent CD and study guide from Caritas, Catholic Mission and ANTaR- that should be in your library. The CD is a soundscape of music and words, featuring music from Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists including Midnight Oil, Wendy Matthews, Yothu Yindi and Paul Kelly. Free accompanying study guide can be [downloaded](#).

### ***Igniting Sparks of Reconciliation and Compassion*** ***-Prayer and Ritual for Staff gatherings in Catholic Schools Today***

By Margaret Abbott RSM

### ***Sparks of Life -Rituals for Children***

By Margie Abbott RSM

### ***Sparks of the Cosmos -Rituals for Seasonal Use***

By Margie Abbott RSM & Jennifer Callanan

# Saying Sorry: Background Information and Student Resources

## Background:

It was government policy (and practice) from the late nineteenth century until the late 1960s to remove part Aboriginal children from their families and to make them wards of the state. The reasons for removal were varied and unquestioned. Accurate records are difficult to access but it has been estimated that during this period more than one hundred thousand children were affected. Most of these children were under the age of five when they were removed and either placed in church or state institutions or fostered by white families.

[Read more...](#)

At the end of 1992, the Australian Prime Minister Mr Paul Keating delivered a motivational [address](#) to launch the International Year of the World's Indigenous People. This was the era of [Mabo](#), the report into [Aboriginal Deaths in Custody](#) had been tabled and the [Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation](#) had been established. Indigenous issues were well and truly on the national agenda.

In 1995 the Federal government commissioned the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) to compile a report on what has become known as the Stolen Generation. It was the first time the Australian Government had formally investigated the devastating and ongoing psychological, social, cultural and economic effects of the forcible removal of Indigenous children. The [Bringing Them Home](#) report was published in April 1997. A key recommendation in the report was that reparation be made to Indigenous people affected by policies of forced removal. That reparation should include an acknowledgement of responsibility and apology from all Australian parliaments and other agencies which implemented policies of forcible removal as well as monetary compensation.

The Queensland parliament formally apologised to Indigenous Australians for past wrongs in 1999. Other states have made similar gestures and the Tasmanian government set up a compensation fund in 2006. Until now, however the Australian government has resolutely refused to do so.

Many of you may recall that in August 1997 Brisbane Catholic Education schools gathered as one to celebrate reconciliation between Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians. At that ceremony each school was presented with a bunya pine as a symbol of reconciliation.

It is fitting that we remember the commitment to reconciliation that we made just over a decade ago, particularly in this season of Lent when we are called to reflect on our actions towards others. On Wednesday February 13<sup>th</sup> as Federal parliament gathers for the first sitting of the year and the prime minister makes his speech, school communities are invited to stand in communion and solidarity  
.....(Mark finish this off...what we asking them to do?????)

## HELPING STUDENTS UNDERSTAND

### Through Literature:

**The Burnt Stick** by Anthony Hill published by Viking 1995

The story of a mixed race child whose mother tries to hide him from the welfare agency. Twice she is successful by darkening his skin with charcoal but on the third visit the boy is taken.

**Lowitja** by Joan Cunningham published by Working Title Press 2003

This is a short, illustrated biography of Lowitja O'Donoghue who was taken from her mother and placed in a home at the age of two.

[Lowitja O'Donoghue](#) has made recent comment on the government's initiative.

**They Took the Children** by David Hollinsworth published by Working Title Press 2003

An information book for primary readers outlining history of the Stolen Generation.

**Requiem for a Beast** by Matt Ottley published by Hachette Livre 2007

An extraordinary multimodal text (written, visual text and music score) featuring three interconnected narratives exploring the theme of reconciliation through truth. For secondary audiences.

**Through Film:**  
**(Available from the Multimedia Centre)**

### **Bringing Them Home VHS**

Based on the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families, this video recalls the history of the "Stolen Generation". The story includes interviews with Mick Dodson, Social Justice Commissioner, as well as individuals who were affected by this policy.

MS – US

### **Sisters pearls and Mission Girls VHS**

Set in the remote Kimberley region, the story of Beagle Bay is a story of Aboriginal people, Irish Sisters of St John of God, pearlers, and paternalistic government policies. The program uses re-enactments, archival film footage and stories from Aboriginal people and some of the sisters today. It contains personal accounts of the stolen generation, and it recounts the challenge of these stories for the sisters and for the wider community.

MS - US

### **Rabbit Proof Fence DVD**

This film is based on the true story and experiences of three young Aboriginal girls, Molly, Gracie and Daisy, who were forcibly taken from their families in Jigalong, Western Australia in 1931.

LS – US

### **Bringing Them Home: Home at Last VHS**

This video features the students of St Joseph's School Rockhampton. It was produced in response to the 1998 Bringing Them Home Report into the Stolen Generation. The video is dedicated to the life of Nanna Alberts who is one of the Stolen Generation. Poetry and song recall the pain of separation during those sad years.

LP - UP

### **Dancing in the Dust DVD**

The lives of three Aboriginal women intersect in this movie about the Stolen Generations. Two of the women were taken as children from their families and grew up in a Catholic orphanage run by nuns. Film maker Jenny Lowdon Kendall draws on her own family history to tell this story of family reunion and reconciliation.

US - Adult

### **Through Music:**

**These resources are available through the Multimedia Centre**

### **Reconciliation - stories of the heart, sounds of the rock**

An excellent CD and study guide from Caritas, Catholic Mission and ANTaR. The CD is a soundscape of music and words, featuring music from Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists including Midnight Oil, Wendy Matthews, Yothu Yindi and Paul Kelly. Free accompanying study guide can be [downloaded](#).

### **One People, One Land by Monica Brown**

### **Igniting Sparks of Reconciliation and Compassion**



**-Prayer and Ritual for Staff gatherings in Catholic Schools Today**

By Margaret Abbott RSM

**Sparks of Life - Rituals for Children**

By Margie Abbott RSM

**Sparks of the Cosmos -Rituals for Seasonal Use**

By Margie Abbott RSM & Jennifer Callanan

and

**Burraay Dreaming Them Home CD -**

(Secondary resource)

**Listen to the Spirit -Shades of Brindle CD**

To purchase these CDs ph: 0413 246 470 or email: [shadesofbrindle@hotmail.com](mailto:shadesofbrindle@hotmail.com)

**Through Story**

[Stolen generations](#)

Listen to the stories of three Aboriginal elders and visit the missions and reserves where they lived as children.

[Living Black pod cast November 2007](#)

Before the Federal election in November 2007, journalist Emma Cook spoke with some Indigenous Australians about the issue of apologising to the Stolen Generation. Listen to the pod cast here. Takes a few minutes to download.

**Through Images and Websites**

In 2002, RMIT and the Melbourne Museum had a competition to design memorials to the Stolen Generations. Results of the competition can be [viewed here](#)

[ANTarR Join the Sea of Hands](#)

The website of Australians for Native title and Reconciliation.

[Racism No Way](#) website