



## OFFICE OF THE HON. DR BRAD PETTITT MLC MEMBER FOR SOUTH METROPOLITAN

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Hon Peter Foster MLC  
Chair, Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs  
Legislative Council Committee Office

Via email: [env@parliament.wa.gov.au](mailto:env@parliament.wa.gov.au)

Dear Chair

### **Petition No. 072 – Financial redress for the Stolen Generations**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Committee regarding this matter.

Twenty-five years ago, the Australian Human Rights Commission published *Bringing Them Home: The Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families* (the Report) which estimated that up to 1 in 3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults – and most families – were affected by forcible removals. The impact of these removals and the inter-generational trauma continue to be felt.

The Report made 54 recommendations toward healing and reconciliation for the benefit of all Australians, a key theme being reparations. Recommendations 3, 4, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20 each call specifically for financial compensation, yet while the Report recommended a national approach to reparations and compensation through the Council of Australian Governments, this has not come to pass.

In much the same way that state and territory governments were the first to issue apologies regarding the Stolen Generations, all except Western Australia and Queensland have led the way in creating compensation and reparation schemes:

- **Tasmania** opened its Stolen Generations compensation scheme in 2006 with a \$5 million fund.
- The Government of **South Australia** was successfully sued by a member of the Stolen Generations in 2007. A Parliamentary Inquiry in 2013 found that a compensation scheme should be established, and an \$11 million fund was made available in 2015.
- The **New South Wales** parliamentary inquiry into reparations and compensation for the Stolen Generations handed down its report in 2016 and a scheme was then commenced in 2017.
- **Victoria** was the most recent state government to address this issue with the introduction of their own reparations package earlier this year.
- The **Australian Capital Territory** and **Northern Territory** are covered by the \$380 million Territories Stolen Generations Redress Scheme, which also opened earlier this year.

Western Australia and Queensland have yet to commit to establishing a compensation scheme or a public inquiry into the matter.

Recommendations 16b and 17 of the Report emphasise that any compensation scheme should be administered by a majority indigenous board and that the scheme should have the widest possible publicity. The design and development of a scheme for Western Australia should therefore have substantial First Nations involvement and suitably broad publicity. One way to accomplish this would be to follow the precedent set by other states by establishing a Parliamentary Inquiry and include in the Terms of Reference a review of the compensation and reparation schemes of other Commonwealth jurisdictions.

The state government has previously stated that they are investigating this issue and assessing the structure of compensation schemes. However, it has taken Western Australia too many years to implement too few of the recommendations of national and state inquiries into First Nations health and wellbeing. As has been the case for survivors of institutional child sexual and physical abuse in their fight for compensation, aging and poor health outcomes mean that many of those who would be eligible for a Stolen Generations compensation payment simply do not have the luxury of time.

The state government has so far prioritised using its record-level surpluses to pay down financial debts, but the debts owed to those who were harmed by deeply racist government policy and practices remain outstanding. It is well past time that Western Australia join other states and territories in heeding the recommendations of the Bringing Them Home Report.

Thank you for considering this petition.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'BPettitt', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Hon Dr Brad Pettitt MLC**  
Member for South Metropolitan