

Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Limited

Media Release



Sorry Day, A Nation as Rich as Ours

26 May 2011

The Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Limited (VALS) observes Sorry Day and pays respects to the members of the Stolen Generations. The *Bringing Them Home Report* (1997) on the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families stated that:

- the only appropriate response to victims of gross violations of human rights is one of reparation;
- for the purposes of responding to the effects of forcible removals, 'compensation' be widely defined to mean 'reparation' and that reparation be made in recognition of the history of gross violations of human rights; and
- reparation should consist of:
 1. acknowledgment and apology
 2. guarantees against repetition
 3. measures of restitution
 4. measures of rehabilitation
 5. monetary compensation

VALS made a submission in 2008 to the Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs in response to the *Inquiry into the Stolen Generation Compensation Bill 2008* and made suggestions relating to the purpose, definition, eligibility, process of application and evidence provisions of the Bill in addition to broader support mechanisms for members of the Stolen Generations and their families.

"The Commonwealth Government responded to this Inquiry by stating that they will not provide compensation to members of the Stolen Generation and would therefore not make comment on that section of the Bill" said VALS Deputy CEO, Annette Vickery. "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities deserve more than this. At minimum the Government should justify why a nation as rich as ours does not have the will or capacity to compensate the members of our society who have had the most taken from them".

VALS is calling on State and Federal Governments to address the issue of long-overdue reparations and establish a Stolen Generations Reparations Tribunal based on the principles developed by Theo van Boven for the United Nations on the Right to Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of Human Rights.