

# Apology to the STOLEN GENERATIONS

## AEU STATEMENT

The Australian Education Union welcomes the apology to the Stolen Generations from the Federal Government.

The apology is a significant moment in Australia's history.

It marks the beginning of a journey which sees a painful and tragic period of Australian history acknowledged. It gives rise to ongoing opportunities for the process of Reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Australian Education Union stands in solidarity with the Stolen Generations, their families and communities as they experience, for the first time, a formal acknowledgement of their pain and suffering.

Beyond the apology, all levels of Australian governments must further acknowledge and urgently act to redress the significant and unacceptable gap between the educational outcomes of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

Wayne Costelloe, AEU Federal Aboriginal Officer, tells why the apology to the Stolen Generation is important to him.



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**M**Y MOTHER and her mother, my grandmother, were Stolen Generation members.

My Nana, whose father was English, had fair skin, used to break down and cry when we would ask her about her youth. She told us that the Old People would cover her skin with mud so that she would look black so she wouldn't be taken away by the police to the dormitories on Palm Island. But, despite the mud or running into the bushes to hide, Nana was still taken. Then, when she became a mother she was sent out to work on the properties of NW Queensland only to have her meagre allowance stolen and placed into a "welfare fund", she had her two year old daughter and six month old son (my mother and uncle) taken away from her and placed in the dormitories of Palm Island.

There they received a token education but were trained to be a domestic or a labourer. Mum didn't know her mother until 15 when they were reunited but by then the cultural and family ties had been broken and they had to try to rebuild it. Nana got an exemption from the Protection Acts and was allowed to get her children back. Mum's memories of growing up on Palm Island also brought her to tears.

That is why the apology to the Stolen Generations is so important to me and my family. My parents and grandparents have all been called home now so I was happy to accept the apology on their behalf.