

18 October 2006

Justice a step closer for Tasmanian Stolen Generations

The Tasmanian Government's apology and compensation package to members of the Stolen Generations announced today was potentially a model for other states and the Federal Government, according to Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR).

ANTaR National Director, Gary Highland said the leadership shown by Tasmanian Premier, Paul Lennon was still lacking at the Federal level.

"In contrast to Premier Lennon, Prime Minister John Howard has refused to apologise to people affected by the policies of child removal and his government has even sought to deny the existence of the stolen generations," Mr Highland said.

Mr Highland said that the Tasmanian response to the stolen generations issue also went further than those of other state governments.

"Although a number of state governments have already apologised to the stolen generations, Tasmania is the first to back these words with action in the form of compensation. Premier Lennon and his government should be congratulated for their leadership on this issue," he said.

Mr Highland that ANTaR will monitor the operation of the Tasmanian scheme closely and also whether the \$5 million funding cap is sufficient.

"If the operation of the scheme matches the Government's stated intentions, the Tasmanian package could be a model for other states to follow," he said.

The Tasmanian compensation scheme comes at time when a Federal Senate inquiry is looking at the unresolved issue of stolen wages from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Mr Highland said the unresolved issues of the stolen generations and stolen wages remain among the nation's greatest barriers to reconciliation and justice for Indigenous people.

"Many of the workers whose wages were taken faced a double injustice because they were also members of the Stolen Generations. They were removed from their families and culture and then had their wages and entitlements removed from them," he said.

"The twin practices of child removal and stolen wages took many Indigenous people into a form of cultural and economic exile, denied a place in Indigenous society and then prevented from gaining the economic stake so essential to enabling decent life in the mainstream," Mr Highland said.

"There's no doubt the Tasmanian announcement will also give hope to the thousands of Indigenous people still seeking justice over their stolen wages around Australia," he said.

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