

**United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues  
Tenth Session - New York  
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**NATIONAL SORRY DAY STATEMENT DELIVERED BY [x] ON BEHALF OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ORGANISATION OF AUSTRALIA:**

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Thank you Madam Chair,

Ho - Pen - O - So - Kuee

We begin by paying our respects to the Traditional Custodians, the Haudenosaunee, on whose land we meet today. We extend our respect to their Elders and Ancestors, and to the Elders and Ancestors of all the worlds' Indigenous Peoples whom have fought to protect their lands and maintain their cultural integrity, lores and languages since forced colonisation.

The forced removal of Indigenous people has been an unfortunate story worldwide, such as the boarding schools in America and residential schools in Canada, causing intergenerational trauma for many Indigenous peoples.

For the Indigenous peoples of Australia, today is a day of deep reflection as we remember the dark and sorry history of colonisation and in particular the laws and policies that enabled the forced removal of generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families and communities over a period of 150 years. These people are known as 'the Stolen Generations'.

These policies caused deep sorrow, trauma and irreversible emotional, mental, cultural and spiritual damage to thousands of Australia's Indigenous peoples.

The 26<sup>th</sup> of May each year is our National Sorry Day. On this day we remember the members of the Stolen Generations and their families. We are reminded of the necessary support, encouragement and healing that is required to restore our people to wellness, and the loving care of our communities who understand their grief at the loss of family and culture. Culture and identity are central to Indigenous peoples well-being, and the impact of forced removal has caused deep emotional scars for all affected by those policies.

The movement to seek an apology from the Australian Government by members of the Stolen Generations culminated in the 2008 National Apology by the Australian Government under our then Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd. This government had the courage and integrity to say sorry so that the healing could begin. For this we thank and commend the Australian Government and remember the outpouring of relief, grief and quiet acceptance of our peoples on the day the nation stopped to hear this historic moment echo over the lawns of Parliament House, across the country and around the world.

That was the first step.

Since then, the government has established and funded The Healing Foundation in consultation with members of the Stolen Generations. Other services such as 'Link Up' have been set up and supported by Governments in each State and Territory to support healing and recovery. These programs are essential to righting this very deep wrong.

The outstanding issue of compensation is still high on the national agenda. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to call on the Australian Government to negotiate appropriate reparations commensurate to the impact caused, including the loss of connection to their lands, territories, families, communities and culture.

In our culture one always has to say sorry for wounding another and then provide recompense. This is a simple act of respect. The Government has said sorry and are attempting to assist us in our healing through the Healing Foundation. We now hope that they will act on the further requirement for our healing, through the development of a national compensation scheme.

On this day we honor those who have lost all hope and opportunity to bond with their mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, families, community, culture, country, their customs and their lore. We hope that governments and civil society commit to upholding Article 8 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, so such laws or policies will never again inflict such an unnecessary level of sorrow.

We ask that the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, together with the Australian Indigenous delegation, honor those that were stolen and those that were affected by removal policies with 1 minutes' silence.

Thank you Madam Chair.