



**Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement Inc.**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **COMPENSATION MUST FOLLOW APOLOGY**

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The Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement (ALRM) CEO, Neil Gillespie welcomes the 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary on 13 February 2010 of the National Apology to the Stolen Generations by the Prime Minister Kevin Rudd.

“This day is embedded in the minds of Australians because of its significance” Mr Gillespie says.

“The truth was finally accepted by our Prime Minister and his Government on behalf of all Australians. We as a nation accepted the truth – rejected the denial and we said “sorry.”

Prime Minister Rudd’s Apology to the Stolen Generations finally recognised the violation of basic human rights that were the assimilation and genocidal policies that forcibly removed Aboriginal children from their families for no other reason other than they were Aboriginal.

The Stolen Generations and their families were innocent victims of inappropriate and racist actions by Governments and none of the hurt and pain was of their own making.

ALRM considers that a compensation fund – similar to that in Canada, New Zealand and other Australian jurisdictions is a practical commitment to redressing the wrongs. Nothing less will be simply symbolic.

A compensation fund that directly assists members of the Stolen Generations to begin their healing is important. The Apology is but one step and must be supported by the Governments healing agenda.

In South Australia, Bruce Trevorrow was the first person from the Stolen Generations to succeed in a compensation claim after many years of struggle through the courts. It unfortunately is a sad reflection on Australia that Mr Trevorrow's case is being appealed by the SA Government and that other members of the Stolen Generations have been denied access to justice for similar claims. It is also inappropriate of the State Government of South Australia and its Ministers to express sorrow on the eve of the anniversary, when it is appealing the decision in the Trevorrow case. This double standard in behaviour is certainly not appreciated by Aboriginal people.

It is essential the Prime Minister follows up the Apology with actions to support claims for compensation like others that have been harmed by inappropriate Government actions.

This fundamental policy shift is needed to close the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians in accessing justice.

It is now time for the Prime Minister to follow through on the expectations raised following the National Apology by either implementing a national compensation scheme for members of the Stolen Generations, or facilitate a scheme in each jurisdiction in the Commonwealth of Australia."

Mr Gillespie says he was in Canberra two years ago when Mr Rudd made the National Apology.

"It was a momentous and proud day for me as an Australian on a day where we had our national leader showing us what statesmanship is all about."

"The Prime Minister encourages me, but he needs to reflect back on his words of two years ago, and help this Nation of ours repair the damage of the past so we can move forward to the future."

"The United Nations Human Rights Committee has expressed concern to Australia on the treatment of members of the Stolen Generations, and has made certain recommendations. ALRM supports the UN position," Mr Gillespie said.

I call on the Prime Minister to follow through on the Apology by facilitating a compensation scheme for members of the Stolen Generations. The Government has provided "out of court" compensation for others harmed by Government policies, and it's time to do the same for Aboriginal people. The Trevorrow case continues after some 14 years, yet non-Aboriginal people receive compensation without such a struggle.

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