



## AIM: ASU Indigenous Members

# SORRY.

13 February 2008

**The ASU endorses the new Rudd Government's apology to the stolen generations. This should have been done long ago by the previous federal government and we are pleased that Kevin Rudd has seized the opportunity provided by the first sitting of the new Parliament to make a fresh start on reconciliation with the symbolic gesture of "sorry".**

The ASU stresses that although we believe that the apology is a powerful and necessary part of the reconciliation process, it is just that, a part. Without concrete actions to redress the balance for our indigenous people, symbolic gestures will decay into acts of lip service alone.

The union movement has been a vocal and active supporter of indigenous rights stretching back generations. As a movement for social justice, we have always been concerned with inequities suffered by any part of the Australian community.

The ASU in particular has a personal interest in indigenous communities because our industrial areas reach right into remote communities where many indigenous people reside and work. Our coverage in local government and social and community services in particular, provide a connection with the indigenous community as both servers and the served (eg. aboriginal legal centres).

ASU officials have also been involved in the "Stolen Wages" campaign. We have lobbied state governments to return properly earned indigenous wages they did not pass on during a period when those governments controlled the financial affairs of indigenous people.

For all these reasons, the ASU not only endorses the federal government apology to be made on February 13, we join with it to say that we are sorry that our indigenous community has been the victim of so many acts of injustice, no matter how well-intentioned any of them may have been.

It is now time to move forward to close the gap on critical areas of concern such as life expectancy (20 years less than other Australians) and infant mortality (three times higher than the rest of the Australian community). And it's time for some innovative ideas on how to provide meaningful work for our indigenous people to help stave off the despair we all know comes from unemployment.

## Further information

For a fact sheet on the apology from Reconciliation Australia:

<http://www.getup.org.au/files/campaigns/sorryFAQ.pdf>

"Apology to stolen generations - questions and answers"

For information from on closing the gap:

<http://www.oxfam.org.au/media/files/CTG.pdf>

"CLOSETHEGAP: Solutions to the Indigenous Health Crisis facing Australia" A policy briefing paper from the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation and OXFAM Australia

Information about the "Stolen Wages" issue can be found at the AIATSIS website:

[http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/library/subject\\_guides\\_bibliographies/stolen\\_wages](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/library/subject_guides_bibliographies/stolen_wages)

Facts, events and other things you can do on Wednesday 13:

<http://www.antar.org.au/sorry>

Published by Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR)

## The apology

Full text of Kevin Rudd's motion of apology and his speech in support of the motion:

[http://www.aph.gov.au/house/Rudd\\_Speech.pdf](http://www.aph.gov.au/house/Rudd_Speech.pdf)

## Other coverage

The Age: "[Power of occasion best expressed by the names of those who were not there](#)".

The article explains the story of King Billy Jimmy Clements, the indigenous man who attended the first sitting of parliament in Canberra in 1927.

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