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MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

Stolen Generations Victoria Supports Reparations Tribunal Bill

Stolen Generations Victoria are in full support of the Stolen Generations Reparations Tribunal Bill presented yesterday by Green's Senator Rachel Siewert.

The Bill seeks to create a nationwide reparations scheme by which a tribunal will assess individual, family and community cases. Reparations would include, but not be restricted to, monetary compensation.

The Federal Government, which issued a nationwide apology in February, has ruled out the possibility of any compensation plan, a sentiment the Coalition also supports.

It proposes, instead, to set up a 'healing fund' to 'close the gap' in life expectancy, health and education between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities.

However, Stolen Generations Victoria chairperson Lyn Austin stated:

"Equality in areas such as health and education is a human right. Every Australian should have this regardless of whether they were taken as a child or not.

"Reparations and compensation is different: this is about justice."

The Reparations Bill follows on from Senator Bartlett's 2008 Compensation Bill, which was rejected by the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs.

While Bartlett's Compensation Bill called solely for monetary compensation, the new Bill suggests an array of reparations, as per the 1997 *Bringing Them Home* report.

Stolen Generations Victoria supports the new Bill, but query two aspects:

1. The 'cut off' date for *ex-gratia* payments. This is tabled as being December 31st 1975. This date is debatable, as in Victoria, coherent Aboriginal child protection acts were introduced as late as 1989.
2. Applicants will not be eligible for an *ex-gratia* payment if the Tribunal is satisfied that 'the removal was in the best interests of the child'. This is a concern as, as many records will demonstrate, most child removals were considered as 'being in the best interests of the child.'

However, it is hoped that the Reparations Bill will be given full consideration by the Senate in the coming months.

Ends

For more information or media comment please contact:

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