

Submission to Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

Issues Paper 6

REDRESS SCHEMES

Introduction

This submission was prepared by knowmore on behalf of Barbara Cummings, an Aboriginal woman who lives and works in Darwin, Northern Territory.

Barbara is the author of *Take This Child: From Kahlin Compound to Retta Dixon Children's Home* (Aboriginal Studies Press, 1 January 1990) a social history of Kahlin Compound and the Retta Dixon Home for Children. Throughout the 20th century these homes formed part of the commonwealth government's response to so called 'part-Aboriginal' children in the Northern Territory.

Barbara is a long-time advocate for the shared history of the Stolen Generation in the Northern Territory and was a resident of Retta Dixon Home. She is also a long term member of Karu (the Aboriginal Child Care Agency in Darwin) and was a facilitator of the Going Home Conference held in Darwin in 1994.

This submission provides an example of the types of redress sought by a particular group of people – those who were institutionalised at Retta Dixon Home in Darwin. It emphasises the need for redress schemes to be flexible and responsive to the needs of groups with shared needs, as well as individuals.

Redress

Redress should focus on the need for survivors to be believed, compensate survivors for pain and suffering and provide life-long practical support with social issues. In the context of the Stolen Generation in the Northern Territory there should also be a focus on encouraging people to take control of their displacement from land, and to talk about rights to land, and access to archives.

Specific redress identified by Barbara includes:

- Development of a cultural precinct in Darwin that will act as a memorial for the Retta Dixon Home and the children who live there.
- Amendments to the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 so that Stolen Generation members are entitled to be recognised as traditional owners.
- Financial compensation for survivors of physical and sexual abuse.
- Supported access to archives.
- Practical support to ex-residents, such as assistance with making a will.

Stolen Generation Compensation Bill 2007

In 2007 Barbara worked for Danila Dilba Biluru Butji Binnilutlum Health Service and the Northern Territory Stolen Generations Corporation on a response to a Bill introduced into the

Senate by Senator Bartlett to establish an ex gratia payment scheme for Stolen Generation children.

That response noted that:

Monetary compensation is an important step in the healing process, and was requested by Aboriginal people who attended the Going Home Conference held in 1994, and was a key recommendation of the Bringing Them Home report tabled in Parliament in 1997.

The response included a number of recommendations including:

- That the commonwealth government should be liable for the removal of children.
- Eligibility for compensation should be open to children who were removed, and their children.
- The assessor (for ex gratia payments) should accept oral evidence about removal.
- That receipt of an ex gratia payment should not prevent Aboriginal people from taking action against relevant state or territory governments.
- A community centre be established in Darwin to provide support to Aboriginal people removed from their families.

Cultural and memorial precinct in Darwin

Retta Dixon Home occupied two sites in Darwin – one at Bagot and the other at a place now known as Karu Park. Both sites have a terrible history of crimes that were committed against children which requires some permanent and visible acknowledgment. The Bagot site is currently subject to a number of development proposals, including a proposal to develop a private and public housing suburb.

Barbara is currently promoting on behalf of the Retta Dixon Community the development of two cultural and memorial projects in relation to this land.

At Bagot a community centre and cultural centre should be established which might be used for art projects as well as a permanent photographic exhibition space for Larrakia, Retta Dixon, Kahlin and other important sites for members of the Stolen Generation such as Parap and Winnellie camps and Police Paddock.

Karu Park is the site of the 'new' Retta Dixon Home that closed in 1980. It is proposed that Karu Park should be redesigned to accommodate a land care/ community garden. The site cannot be used for any other type of development because it is under a flight path. Before any development occurs the site should be culturally cleaned due to the great number of children who continue to feel grieved about their bad experiences.