

“Remember Me”: Commemorating the Tenth Anniversary of the *Bringing Them Home* Report

REVIEWED BY REN ADAMS

The *Bringing Them Home* report was launched on 26 May 1997 at the Australian Reconciliation Convention in Melbourne. *Bringing Them Home* reported on the findings of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People (hereafter referred to as the “National Inquiry”), conducted by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC). The inquiry was instigated following requests from various agencies, including the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC), which was the first national Indigenous organisation to make public a call for a national inquiry into the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children. Now, more than ten years on, SNAICC has released a commemorative publication to help recall the political and social environment and events that led up to the inquiry, as well as to reflect on the progress and effects of the recommendations handed down in the report.

“*Remember Me*” (SNAICC, 2007) is arranged as a collection of essays reflecting the history and climate surrounding the National Inquiry and the subsequent release of the *Bringing Them Home* report. Authors include past and present members of the SNAICC leadership team, as well as Indigenous and non-Indigenous authors selected for their knowledge of the process and findings of the National Inquiry and the responses to the report from governments and the wider Australian population.

In the opening article, SNAICC Executive Officer, Julian Pocock, remarks: “in 1997 *Bringing Them Home* provided an opportunity to connect the truth of our nation to a reconciliation process that was searching for a way forward. When *Bringing Them Home* was silenced, so was the truth and at that point our national process of reconciliation faltered” (p. 3).

Quoting from the SNAICC Policy Paper of 2003, *Seven Priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children* (SNAICC, 2003), Pocock in his article repeated the need to place a priority on a National Apology to the Stolen Generations:

A National Apology, which acknowledges the harsh injustices of past child removals, and the ongoing impact of these on health, happiness,

and parenting skills of current generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, is a foundation upon which the success of many other initiatives will depend. When we fail to recognise how the past lives on, we allow the injustices of the past to continue (cited in SNAICC, 2007, pp. 4–5).

This year’s apology by the Australian Government to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people affected by the past policies of child removal has now provided that foundation.

Essays featured in “*Remember Me*” include those from SNAICC Chairperson, Muriel Bamblett; former SNAICC Chairperson, Brian Butler; Professor Anna Haebich, from Griffith University; and Tom Calma, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner (HREOC). Also included is the speech given by the former HREOC Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Professor Mick Dodson AM, at the launch of the *Bringing Them Home* report in May 1997.

“*Remember Me*” is a valuable and informative resource for Australian family relationship practitioners. The essays offer a range of opinion and historical perspective on the issues surrounding the *Bringing Them Home* report, both for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

The electronic version of “*Remember Me*” can be downloaded for free on the SNAICC website at www.snaicc.asn.au/_uploads/rsfil/00022.pdf. Print copies are also available to order from SNAICC on (03) 9489 8099 or publications@snaicc.asn.au

References

Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care. (2003) *Seven priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children* (SNAICC Policy Paper 2003). North Fitzroy, Vic.: Author. Retrieved 15 March 2008, from: <http://www.snaicc.asn.au/policy/default.cfm?loadref=67>

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