



AIATSIS

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ABORIGINAL
AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDIES

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Stolen Generations

The Stolen Generations are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who, when they were children, were taken away from their families and communities as the result of past government policies. Children were removed by governments, churches and welfare bodies to be brought up in institutions, fostered out or adopted by white families.

The removal of Aboriginal children took place from the early days of British colonisation in Australia. It broke important cultural, spiritual and family ties and has left a lasting and intergenerational impact on the lives and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Government policies concerning Aboriginal people were implemented under different laws in the different states and territories of Australia. These laws meant nearly every aspect of the lives of Indigenous people was closely controlled by government: relationships and marriage, children, work, travel, wages, housing and land, and access to health care and education.

Records about the Stolen Generations and their families were kept by governments, as well as by churches, missions and other non-government agencies. Many records have been lost as the result of poor recordkeeping practices, fires, floods, and in some cases, due to deliberate destruction. Changes to the structure of government departments and within non-government organisations can also make it very difficult to trace records to assist with finding family connections.

History of Link-Up

Family tracing and reunion services are available to members of the Stolen Generations throughout Australia via the national Link-Up program.

The first Link-Up service in Australia was established in 1980 in New South Wales. This was followed by Link-Ups in Queensland and the Northern Territory. Prior to 1997 other types services also operated to assist people who had been separated from their families to reconnect.



State or territory	Service	Established
New South Wales	Link-Up NSW	1980
Queensland	Link-Up QLD	1984
Northern Territory	Link-Up Services in the NT	1985
	Central Australian Aboriginal & Islander Child Care Agency	1992
Victoria	Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency	1993
Tasmania	Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre	1994
Western Australia	Yorganop Child Care Aboriginal Corp	1992–93
South Australia	Aboriginal Link-up Family Information Section, Dept. of Family and Community Services	1994–95

The Bringing Them Home report

From 1995 to 1997 the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) undertook a National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families. The Commission's findings were published in 1997 in the Bringing Them Home Report. <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/bringing-them-home-report-1997>

This report included 54 recommendations, a number of which related to records and family tracing. Recommendation 30a stated:

That the Council of Australian Governments ensure that Indigenous community-based family tracing and reunion services are funded in all regional centres with a significant Indigenous population and that existing Indigenous community-based services, for example health services, in smaller centres are funded to offer family tracing and reunion assistance and referral.

As a result of this recommendation the Australian Government funded a national network of family tracing and reunion services – the National Link-Up Program. Link-Ups in NSW, Queensland and the NT gained improved funding and new Link-Up Programs were established in other areas including South Australia, Central Australia and Western Australia.

Role of Link-Up

Link-Up organisations around Australia provide family tracing and reunion services to members of the Stolen Generations and their families. These services include:

- researching family and personal records
- emotional support when accessing family and personal records
- finding family members
- assistance and support at family reunions
- support and counselling before, during and after family reunion.

Link-Up gives priority to first generation members of the Stolen Generations who have directly experienced removal or separation from family and community, especially those who are elderly or have urgent health concerns.

Link-Up also provides services to subsequent generations of family members who have been affected by intergenerational trauma related to removal, and to members of families and communities from whom children were removed.

Link-Up locations

There are Link-Up organisations in most states and territories.

- New South Wales: www.linkupnsw.org.au
- Northern Territory Stolen Generations: www.ntsgac.org.au
- Queensland: www.link-upqld.org.au
- South Australia – Nunkuwarrin Yunti: nunku.org.au/our-services/social-emotional/link-up/
- Tasmania – no Link-Up services operate in Tasmania
- Victoria: www.linkupvictoria.org.au
- Western Australia – Kimberley Stolen Generation: kimberleystolengeneration.com.au
- Western Australia – Yorgum Aboriginal Corporation: www.yorgum.org.au
- Australian Capital Territory – contact New South Wales

See: Where to get help – Link-Up services for all contact information.

AIATSIS Family History Unit and Link-Ups

The AIATSIS Family History Unit works closely with Link-Ups to help members of the Stolen Generations to find their families and to find out about their family history.

- In conjunction with Link-Ups, AIATSIS developed a Cert IV in Stolen Generations Family History Research and Case Management.
- AIATSIS also offers ongoing research support in family tracing.
- AIATSIS has memorandums of understanding with institutions located in Canberra and can assist Link-Ups to find and retrieve documents from the following institutions: ACT Heritage Library and ACT Territory Records, Australian War Memorial, National Archives of Australia, National Library of Australia, and the Noel Butlin Archives Centre.