



European Network for Indigenous Australian Rights (ENIAR)
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British MPs' motion to support Australia's 'sorry' to Indigenous people welcome: ENIAR

The European Network for Indigenous Australian Rights (ENIAR) has welcomed the British MPs' motion acknowledging responsibility for ill-treatment of Indigenous Australians. The motion supports the Australian government's recent apology to the stolen generations of Indigenous children and their families and communities, and comes at a significant and moving time in Australian history, says ENIAR.

'ENIAR congratulates Jeremy Corbyn, MP and the 5 other MPs who have so far signed the motion. It is historically significant and very meaningful for Indigenous Australians, non-Indigenous Australians and British people who feel there is a shame associated with the wrongs perpetrated in their name.

'It should always be remembered in both Australian and British history that the relatively recent colonisation of Australia involved institutionalised brutality towards Indigenous people. The effects of early colonial government policies and practices, as well as more recent Australian government policies have left a very real legacy on the lives of Indigenous Australians today. The stolen generations started long before the official government policies of 1920-1970s,' says Gill Watson, ENIAR Coordinator.

'On the positive side, this motion is forward-looking and reflects an increasing awareness of the need for truth and reconciliation,' says Ms Watson.

'It's another step in the right direction and will bring healing to Indigenous and non-Indigenous people', says Francis Firebrace, an Indigenous Yorta Yorta author, artist and educator working in the UK.

'It also touches on practical things British and European governments can do – for instance ensure the return of sacred human remains and artefacts, taken and held in museums. ENIAR would also be keen to see proactive moves towards helping stolen children who were taken from Australia to the UK and now live disjointed, troubled lives in the UK.

'A similar Early Day Motion 927 in 2001 was signed by 49 MPs from all parties. This Motion is now open for signature by other MPs, and ENIAR urges all MPs to research the issues themselves and sign the motion. We are excited by the support from British people and other Europeans to try and right the wrongs of the past. We hope this Motion will keep up the momentum and good-will necessary to tackle the inequalities facing Indigenous Australians', concluded Ms Watson.

Background

The following Early Day Motion 1000 was tabled on 21 February 2008 by MPs Jeremy Corbyn, Katy Clark, Ann Cryer, Nia Griffith, Kelvin Hopkins and Peter Kilfoyle.

Indigenous Australians

That this House recalls Great Britain's role in the colonisation, settlement and early governance of Australia; acknowledges Great Britain's responsibility for the suffering and degradation inflicted on indigenous Australians including the removal of indigenous human remains and material culture; supports the Prime Minister of Australia, Kevin Rudd, in his apology to the stolen generations and other indigenous Australians for the pain, loss, deprivation and abuse they have suffered; recognises the continuing strength and vitality of the indigenous peoples of Australia and their culture; and supports the Australian government's commitment to recognising the special status of Australia's indigenous peoples and tackling the inequalities still facing indigenous Australians.

Information on Prime Minister Rudd's apology, Stolen Generations, other Indigenous issues and the 2001 EDM 927 are at www.eniar.org

<http://www.eniar.org/news/news-issues/Sorry.html>

<http://www.eniar.org/stolengenerations.html>

<http://www.eniar.org/news/sorry5.html>

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