

THE UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

SYNOD OF VICTORIA

EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE TWENTIETH MEETING OF THE SYNOD 20-25 SEPTEMBER, 1996.

96.6.4 COMMISSION FOR MISSION

The Synod resolved:

re: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families.

- 96.6.4.14
- (a) To affirm the profound importance of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families.
 - (b) While recognising that for the most part our forebears acted in good faith in their time and age to provide protection against dangers to the welfare of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, acknowledge and apologise to Aboriginal communities throughout Australia and Torres Strait Islander communities for:
 - (i) its complicity with government policies and programs which separated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their parents;
 - (ii) the personal and social trauma and on-going harm caused to individuals, families and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; and
 - (iii) any physical violence and sexual abuse perpetrated by staff who should have been trustworthy.
 - (c) To acknowledge the faithful staff, house parents, foster carers and adoptive parents who provided secure, safe and loving environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and youth.
 - (d) That the Synod encourage its child, youth and family service agencies:
 - (i) to seek discussions with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress with a view to making available appropriate agency facilities, resources and expertise to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities.
 - (ii) to support, initially for three years, a Project sanctioned by the Koori Reference Group formed by the Minajalku Centre, recognising that the Project will:
 - research the identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and youth who were placed by agencies of the Synod of Victoria; and

enable the provision of information and counselling to those children, youth and their families.

- (e) In the light of the evidence presented to the National Inquiry of the damage caused by the policies of the Victorian Government with regard to the separation of Aboriginal children from their parents, to urge the Victorian Government:
 - (i) to acknowledge and apologise to the Aboriginal community for the racist assumptions that underlay the policy and practice of taking Aboriginal children from their parents;
 - (ii) to support the provision of compensation for those who as Aboriginal children were separated from their parents and thereby lost the possibility of access to land or forfeited their land rights; and
 - (iii) to provide additional support to community-based support service staffed by Aboriginal counsellors for people who have been affected by these policies and practices.