

Stolen Generations

In 1996 the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission established an inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. The terms of reference of the inquiry invited groups, including churches and community service agencies, to prepare submissions for the Commission and to develop responses to the revelations of the inquiry.

The Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) and the Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia co-operated in responding to the inquiry and encouraged synods and agencies of the Uniting Church to do likewise. In Victoria, the Commission for Mission in co-operation with the UAICC established a task group to address those matters. The group included representatives from the Congress, Synod and the community service agencies.

The group undertook to:

- support the formation of the Koori Reference Group operating under the auspices of Minajilku (the Ecumenical Aboriginal Centre) and to heed their advice and comment on proposals as they evolved;
- evaluate current agency practice in relation to Aboriginal and Islander children and families, with the development of recommendations where relevant;
- prepare a brief history of the involvement of the Uniting Church and its predecessors in the separation and care of Aboriginal and Islander children;
- explore, with the advice of the Koori Reference Group, appropriate ongoing support to assist Aboriginal and Islander people in the location of family members;
- create appropriate opportunities for various groups ranging from family members to carers, policy makers and concerned individuals to reflect on the experience of the past and, where helpful and possible, to seek reconciliation and forgiveness.

That is the context in which the Synod meeting of 1996 passed Resolution 96.6.4.14. re the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their families.