

# National Apology Anniversary

## The speech that stopped the Nation

The **National Apology to Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples** was delivered by the former Prime Minister Mr. Kevin Rudd on February 13th, 2008, and acknowledged in particular the Stolen Generations. This year significantly marks the 10th anniversary of this historic occasion.

The **National Sorry Day Committee** encourages all schools, community groups, workplaces and individuals to commemorate this important event in Australia's history. *"As the first significant date of the year in the school calendar, the Anniversary of the Apology offers a positive and solid platform from which lessons regarding this difficult aspect of Australia's history can be launched."* (NSDC)

With sensitivity, honouring the Apology Anniversary and National Sorry Day builds understanding and respect between school and community, teachers and students.

Commemorate this day as a whole school activity. Some schools hold a special assembly inviting families and Koorie community members, others plant a commemorative tree annually or have Koorie focused activities through the day. In the lead-up to the [30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the song's release](#), multi-award winning Gunditjmara-Bundjalung composer and singer the late Archie Roach, called for all schoolchildren to be taught his iconic anthem ["Took the Children Away"](#) as a history lesson on one of the country's darkest chapters. Download the National Sorry Day Committee's schools resource, [Learning about the Stolen Generation](#).

If possible, invite a Stolen Generations member or another Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander parent, Elder or community member to speak with your students about the Stolen Generations and the importance of celebrating the Apology Anniversary.



Discuss with your guest speaker prior to the lesson what they are willing to talk about, given potentially sensitive issues. Remember that across Victoria and the rest of the nation almost every, if not all Aboriginal families have been negatively affected by the policies and practices that have led to dispossession and what we now call the Stolen Generations. Be mindful that for many, this is still very difficult to reconcile and talk about.

[Listen to or play footage](#) from the National Apology and discuss the speeches with your students.

Some questions you might want to consider with your students as part of a lesson are:

1. When might we apologise and say sorry for something, and how important is it? Any personal stories to share? How did you feel when someone apologised?
2. Why was it so important for our Federal Parliament to make an Apology?
3. How did your family members feel when the Australian Parliament said 'sorry' in 2008?

To hear personal stories from members of the Stolen Generations, go to [Stolen Generations' Testimonies](#).



Reaction to the Prime Minister's apology in Canberra and Sydney today.  
Photos: Peter Rae, Jon Reid and Mark Graham., Sydney Morning Herald.

13th February, 2008

## **The Apology ...**

### **Motion offering an apology to Australia's Indigenous peoples.**

The Speaker: Prime Minister.

Prime Minister (Hon Kevin Rudd MP): Mr Speaker, I move:

That today we honour the Indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history.

We reflect on their past mistreatment.

We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were Stolen Generations - this blemished chapter in our nation's history.

The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia's history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.

We apologise for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians.

We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country.

For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry.

To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry. And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry.

We the Parliament of Australia respectfully request that this apology be received in the spirit in which it is offered as part of the healing of the nation.

For the future we take heart; resolving that this new page in the history of our great continent can now be written.

We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians.

A future where this Parliament resolves that the injustices of the past must never, never happen again.

A future where we harness the determination of all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to close the gap that lies between us in life expectancy, educational achievement and economic opportunity.

A future where we embrace the possibility of new solutions to enduring problems where old approaches have failed.

A future based on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility.

A future where all Australians, whatever their origins, are truly equal partners, with equal opportunities and with an equal stake in shaping the next chapter in the history of this great country, Australia.

# CURRICULUM LINKS

## Victorian Curriculum:

(VCHHK076)

**History / Levels 3 and 4 / Historical Knowledge / Community, remembrance and celebrations.**

Significance of days and weeks celebrated or commemorated in Australia and the importance of symbols and emblems, including Australia Day, ANZAC Day, Harmony Week, National Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC week and National Sorry Day.

*See more Victorian Curriculum links on the following page.*

## Australian Curriculum v9.0:

(AC9HS3KO1)

**Humanities and Social Sciences / History / Year 3 / Knowledge and Understanding / Community and remembrance.**

Significant events, symbols and emblems that are important to Australia's identity and diversity, and how they are celebrated, commemorated or recognised in Australia, including Australia Day, Anzac Day, NAIDOC Week, National Sorry Day, Easter, Christmas, and other religious and cultural festivals.



## Victorian Curriculum links:

**VCHHK076** Significance of days and weeks celebrated or commemorated in Australia and the importance of symbols and emblems, including Australia Day, ANZAC Day, Harmony Week, National Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC week and National Sorry Day: History 3-4: Community, remembrance and celebrations.

**CHHK094** The different experiences and perspectives of Australian democracy and citizenship, including the status and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, migrants, women, and children: History 5-6: Australia as a nation.

**VCHHK154** Significance of the following events in changing society: 1962 right to vote federally, 1967 Referendum, Reconciliation, Mabo decision, Bringing Them Home Report (the Stolen Generations), the Apology and the different perspectives of these events: History 9-10: Rights and freedoms (1945 – the present).

**VCCCG031** Explain the Australian government's roles and responsibilities at a global level, including provision of foreign aid, peacekeeping and the United Nations: Civics & Citizenship 9-10: Government and Democracy.

**VCDSTS044** Investigate the ways in which designed solutions evolve locally, nationally, regionally and globally through the creativity, innovation and enterprise of individuals and groups: Design and Technology 7-8: Technologies and Society.

**Personal and Social Capabilities** (various Content Descriptions) -

For Levels 9 and 10, the curriculum focuses on analysing factors that influence respectful relationships in a range of diverse settings and the importance of empathy and respect for diversity in creating a cohesive society. Students are provided with opportunities to engage in activities that promote initiative, independence, interdependence and leadership. They evaluate their contribution to group tasks and suggest improvements to enable achievement of a team goal. Students explore the nature of conflict in a range of personal, local, national and global contexts. They evaluate a variety of strategies to prevent or resolve conflict.



Sydney on Australia Day 2008, three weeks prior to the Apology. The 'Sorry' writing was commissioned by a private individual. Photo: Michael Davies.