



**Office of the Hon Jenny Macklin MP
Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services
and Indigenous Affairs**

*Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600*

*Telephone: (02) 6277 7560
Facsimile: (02) 6273 4122*

MC08-034398

23 JAN 2009

Mr Bruce Reyburn
PO Box 257
THIRROUL NSW 2515

Dear Mr Reyburn

Thank you for your letter of 4 November 2008 to the Prime Minister, the Hon Kevin Rudd MP, about various nation building measures for Indigenous Australians. Your letter was referred to the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Hon Jenny Macklin MP, as these matters fall within her portfolio responsibilities. The Minister has asked me to reply to you on her behalf. I apologise for the delay in responding.

Thank you for sharing your comments and concerns that the Stolen Generations should receive monetary compensation from the Commonwealth Government. The Government has stated there will be no compensation provided to the Stolen Generations.

The Government's priority is closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians through a new partnership based on respect, cooperation and mutual responsibility.

Australian Governments have agreed to a number of ambitious targets for closing the gap. To back up these targets, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has recently committed \$4.6 billion in targeted initiatives for Indigenous Australians to drive reform across early childhood development, health, housing, economic development and remote service delivery. Governments are developing implementation plans in consultation with Indigenous people.

COAG will hold a dedicated meeting in 2009 to progress the national strategy for achieving the Closing the Gap targets, particularly in urban and regional areas. The Australian Government is leading these major commitments and reforms because we know that more of the same is not enough to close the gap.

The Australian Government is committed to establishing a National Indigenous Representative Body (NIRB) to give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people a voice in national affairs and is seeking their views prior to making a decision on the form of the body. A public consultation process commenced in July 2008 which to date has included 80 public meetings across Australia in every state and territory.

In response to feedback from communities, Minister Macklin has recently agreed to an extended consultation process. The next phase of consultation will be led by an independent steering committee of Indigenous leaders, convened by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner. It will include a roundtable of Indigenous leaders and further consultation meetings, with the aim of providing a recommendation to Government by July 2009.

Also, on 26 May 2008, the Prime Minister announced that a forum of experts would be convened to map ways forward for healing among Australia's Indigenous peoples. The Indigenous Healing Forum was held on 16 and 17 September 2008 in Canberra.

The forum discussed the real impacts of trauma on individuals, families and communities, including children, and looked at a range of models currently in use across the country. In order to get a range of views on Indigenous healing and its potential applications, a very broad representation from the government, community and other sectors as well as members of the Stolen Generations were invited to attend and contribute to the discussion.

The Indigenous Healing Forum was positively received by participants and marked the beginning of a process to address Indigenous healing. The outcomes of the Forum will be used to inform the next steps in that process.

I would like to take this opportunity to assure you that the Government is committed to the process of reconciliation and a future where all Australians are equal partners, with equal opportunities in shaping the future of our country.

Thank you again for writing.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K.L. Huntington'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kate Huntington
Adviser