

Legislative Council

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STOLEN GENERATIONS REPARATIONS TRIBUNAL BILL

The Hon. A. BRESSINGTON (18:05):

I rise briefly to indicate my support for the referral of the Stolen Generation Reparations Tribunal Bill 2010 to the Aboriginal Lands Parliamentary Standing Committee for inquiry. The establishment of a statutory redress scheme to award reparation or ex gratia payments, in this case specifically to those Indigenous peoples forcibly removed from their families against their best interests, has my full support.

Given the alternative of requiring claimants to retrace the footsteps of Mr Bruce Trevorrow, a dedicated tribunal for such claimants would tailor the eligibility criteria or provide a clear pathway to redress. I am also pleased that the bill recognises that, for most claimants, an ex gratia payment alone will not amount to reparation and that many will require ongoing services to recover. I know this from the experience of state wards who, despite the claims of some, are not simply seeking a payout but also seeking ongoing services to assist them to move past the trauma inflicted upon them.

I would like to very, very briefly reflect on the fact that, just a couple of weeks ago, my nine-year-old son and I sat down and watched the movie *Rabbit-Proof Fence* together because I was researching this bill. He could not quite get his head around what the problem was. At the end of the movie, he was full of questions about why would a government do such a thing, why would children be removed from their parents, and why were Aboriginal children not allowed to remain with their mothers? At the end of the day, they were simple questions, but it was very hard to answer them in a reasonable and logical way, apart from the fact that governments do not always really know what they are doing and that governments do not always really get it right.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. A. BRESSINGTON: Both, not just this government.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. A. BRESSINGTON: Yes; don't take it all personally. I think it is very important that we set up a tribunal such as this so that, apart from reports and inquiries, we are able to establish the fact that in the past we got it wrong and, as the Hon. Stephen Wade said earlier, to look to the past in order to be able to move forward, and to do it better and to do it differently, and to make sure that some of the dire mistakes we have made are not repeated.

I always hold the hope that this bill will also lead the way to dealing with the victims of abuse in state care and their issues because the emotional, psychological, physical and all the other kinds of damage that has been done is not so different. The sooner we can stop these mistakes being made, for both Aboriginal and white people, the better off we will all be. I commend the bill and I commend the Hon. Tammy Franks for introducing it.