



Stolen Generation victims launch class action against commonwealth



Aboriginal leader and Litigation Lending Services director Warren Mundine said he was proud to see Indigenous people fighting for a meaningful apology and resolution. Picture: John Feder

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The Commonwealth government faces a class action from Indigenous people in the Northern Territory who are demanding compensation for the forcible removal from their families as children between 1910 and the 1970s.

The group filed the class action in the New South Wales Supreme Court on Wednesday.

Shine Lawyers special counsel Tristan Gaven represents the men and woman who have already joined and estimates up to 6000 men and women in the NT are eligible.

“The Commonwealth was responsible for tearing apart Indigenous families in the Territory and it’s up to the Commonwealth to make amends,” Mr Gaven said.

“Nearly every state and territory has acted on recommendations to compensate Indigenous Australians who were victims of the Stolen Generation, but nothing has been offered to those affected in the Northern Territory, that’s why we’ve filed this class action.”

The class action is funded by Litigation Lending Services.

Aboriginal leader and Litigation Lending Services director Warren Mundine said he was proud to see Indigenous people fighting for a meaningful apology and resolution.

“If this was to happen today, there would be serious public global outrage and criminal charges laid on all involved for these barbaric acts,” he said.

“The government needs to acknowledge that First Nations People will never know what life might have been like if this tragic theft of innocence and identity didn’t occur,” said Mr. Mundine.

Among the claimants is Heather Alley was nine when she was removed from her mother.

“I loved my mother and when she passed away, it took me thirty years to find the strength to even say her name. That’s how much the loss of her shook me,” she said.

“In my eighty-four years, I think I only ever got to spend eight with her, and she was a good woman who loved me dearly.”

Ms Alley was born at Roper River Mission. In 1924 she was taken from Mataranka to Mulgoa in NSW. She eventually found her way back into the Northern Territory and from ages 9-14 she was placed into St Mary’s Hostel in Alice Springs where she remembers being flogged for no reason. “I only saw my mum in December holidays.”

Ms Alley ended up studying and attaining a diploma of counselling after years of searching for answers. “I couldn’t understand why this was allowed to happen and I was very broken for many years.”

She and her daughter have tried unsuccessfully to trace her ancestry. “My mother never knew her mother. They’ve wiped away entire generations, like they never existed.” Ms. Alley said. “I joined this class action because I believe our stories have to be told.”

Lending Litigation Services chairman Shaun Bonett said it was shameful that the Commonwealth had refused to pay compensation to members of the Stolen Generation in the Northern Territory, despite their own recommendation to do so.

“All other states with similar policies have paid compensation to those affected,” he said.