

Statement

Klynton Wanganeen
Aboriginal Engagement Commissioner

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APOLOGY IS A TURNING POINT FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

Mr Klynton Wanganeen, Commissioner for Aboriginal Engagement, today welcomed Prime Minister Rudd's apology to the Aboriginal Stolen Generation.

Commissioner Wanganeen said that the apology is a step in the right direction for the Federal Government in recognising that Aboriginal people have experienced a history of unjust treatment.

"Although long overdue, a National apology for the injustices Aboriginal people have faced in the past means a lot to the Aboriginal community," Mr Wanganeen said.

"It signals the beginning of a new era from which Aboriginal people can move forward and start the healing process."

"The Government of South Australia formally apologised to the Aboriginal people of this State over a decade ago. It was time that the Federal Government followed suit," he said.

The Commissioner has today called for all State governments to reaffirm the apology.

"This is the beginning of a long process and we cannot rest on our laurels. Governments now need to work with Aboriginal people in order to move forward," he said.

The Commissioner believes that there is a lack of public understanding around the Stolen Generation.

He today called for public awareness to be raised about the history of the Aboriginal people of Australia and the injustices they have faced.

"It is time for Aboriginal people to speak out about what their families have been through. It is important for the healing process and for the education of our society," he said.

"The impact runs deeper than just the stolen generation - many Aboriginal people continue to feel displaced, and it's something that will remain in our history."

Commissioner Wanganeen encouraged Aboriginal people to embrace and acknowledge the apology as a turning point, and to focus of the path forward as a strong, proud Aboriginal community.

As the first Commissioner for Aboriginal Engagement, Commissioner Wanganeen commenced his role in late January.

He is an advocate on behalf of the Aboriginal people, and will work with the soon to be established Aboriginal Advisory Council to advise the government on Aboriginal matters.