

MAKE HEALING HAPPEN

in South Australia

There are currently more than 33,600 Stolen Generations survivors nationally.

Around 2,100 survivors live in South Australia. More than 47.8% of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults living in South Australia are descendants of Stolen Generations survivors.

- **Realise** the impacts on Stolen Generations survivors and descendants, the economic costs, and the significant 'gap within a gap' for survivors and their descendants.
- **Recognise** that there are practical things we can all do to make a difference in the lives of Stolen Generations survivors and descendants.
- **Act** by taking immediate action to implement and support much-needed changes, which include overdue reparations for Stolen Generations survivors, a national intergenerational healing strategy, and robust accountability mechanisms.



Make Healing Happen in **South Australia**

For about a century, thousands of Aboriginal children were systematically stolen from their families, communities, and culture, many never to be returned. They were taken from their homes, on their way to school, and put in more than 480 institutions, adopted or fostered by non-Indigenous people. They were often subjected to degrading treatment and abuse. This happened through formal government race-based policies in all states and territories from the mid-1800s to the 1970s.

From the late 19th century, the South Australian 'Protector' had wide-ranging powers to control the lives of Aboriginal people and remove children from their families. Aboriginal children were placed in missions, foster homes, hostels, and institutions until the 1980s.

In 2015, the South Australian Government established a Stolen Generations reparations scheme to acknowledge the harm caused by past policies of forced removal.

The impacts of this tragic chapter of our nation's history are still being felt today. Stolen Generations survivors, their families, and descendants experience chronic health issues, disability, and alarming and disproportionate levels of economic and social outcomes.

Impacts of intergenerational trauma being experienced across generations without being addressed present the biggest ongoing burden for Stolen Generations survivors, their families, and communities. The *Make Healing Happen: it's time to act* report sets out a plan with recommendations to achieve real and lasting healing.

We must all understand our role in intergenerational healing, system by system, sector by sector, and workforce by workforce, with and for Stolen Generations survivors, their families, and communities.



Who are the Stolen Generations?

There are more than

2,100

Stolen Generations
survivors living in
South Australia.

6.1% of Australia's
Stolen Generations
survivors live in
South Australia.

25.9% of
South Australia's
Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander population
aged 50 and over are
Stolen Generations
survivors. In 2023, all will
be eligible for aged care.

Almost half
of all Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander
peoples in South Australia
are Stolen Generations
descendants (47.8%, or
10,900 people).

Stolen Generations survivors



Analyses by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare provides clear evidence of the 'gap within the gap' – the difference in health and wellbeing outcomes between Stolen Generations survivors and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were not removed.

In 2018–19, among Stolen Generations survivors aged 50 and over:

- 63% lived in households with the three lowest income percentages
- 57% were not currently employed (among those aged 50 to 64 only)
- 70% had government payments as their main source of income
- 66% did not own a home
- 88% had not completed formal schooling

In relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural connections:

- 51.6% identified with a clan, tribal, or language group
- 82.3% recognised an area as homeland or traditional country

In relation to long-term health conditions:

- 47% had arthritis
- 37% had diabetes
- 37% had high blood pressure
- 36% had a mental health condition

Compared to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of the same age, Stolen Generations survivors are:

- 1.7 times as likely to have experienced discrimination due to being Indigenous
- 1.6 times as likely to live in a household that could not raise \$2,000 in an emergency
- 1.5 times as likely to be the victim of actual or threatened physical harm
- 1.4 times as likely to have a severe or profound disability

Stolen Generations descendants

Among children living in Stolen Generations households:

- 76% experienced stress in the past 12 months
- 66% live in a household with income in the lowest 30% of the income distribution
- 64% live in a household where no member could raise \$2000 in an emergency
- 82% live in a property not owned by any household member

In relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural connections:

- 75% were involved in cultural events, ceremonies, or organisations in the past 12 months
- 59% identified with a clan, tribal, or language group

Data is Australia-wide, not state-specific.

Yvonne Mills

My family and cultural connections are through my mother, and her father (Kokatha) and mother (Mirning) of the Far West Coast of South Australia.



At 12-13 years of age my mother was separated from her parents and family at Koonibba Mission and sent to work as a domestic in a Lutheran home in Yorke Peninsula. She was 18-19 years of age when she returned to Koonibba and was kept from reuniting with her father and mother in the family home, built by her father, a stonemason.

After her marriage, and after having five children, she was sent an unconditional exemption certificate in the post. My mother was trapped between two different worlds. No longer an Aborigine according to the *Aborigines Act* and falling through the gap of mainstream services available to the general community, this meant her five children were taken from her. I was the youngest, at 25 months old, when we were separated from each other. The following year, we were separated again when we were fostered out to different homes. I spent 16 years as a ward of the state.

I do not remember what occurred during the first three years of my life and cannot verbalise the experience, but my siblings remember. I was only an infant, but that does not mean I was not affected. Today, science tells us that traumatic events have a much greater impact on babies and toddlers. Traumatic events that affect a family and disrupt family life directly affect babies and toddlers, who are also vulnerable.

Without immediate care and treatment to recover, I grew up with feelings and emotions I could never understand. When I was 11 years old, I was sent to see a psychologist and diagnosed as having 'an inferiority complex'. My beautiful mother suffered in silence for the remainder of her young life after spending more than a decade trying to get her children returned to her care. We must never forget our mothers, who suffered in silence, as we face the challenges of intergenerational trauma.

For more information

To learn more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations and descendants visit healingfoundation.org.au

About the data

Information in this fact sheet is based on Australian Institute of Health and Welfare material and data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

(02) 6272 7500

info@healingfoundation.org.au

healingfoundation.org.au



HealingFoundation

Strong Spirit • Strong Culture • Strong People