The 8th Anniversary of the National Apology to the Stolen Generations will take place on Friday 12 February at Veale Gardens to remember the thousands that gathered at Elder Park on the morning of the Apology in 2008.

The term, “Stolen Generations” refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians who were forcibly removed as children from their families, their communities, their culture, their spiritual beliefs and their sacred sites by government, welfare or church authorities and placed into institutional care or with non-Indigenous foster families. This had a major impact on the social and emotional wellbeing of not only the Stolen Generations but also their children, their grandchildren and their great grandchildren.

The forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children began as early as the mid-1800s and continued until 1970. Many of these removals occurred as the result of official laws and policies aimed at assimilating the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population into the wider community. The 1997 Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families, conducted by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, found that between 1 in 10 and 3 in 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were forcibly removed from their families and communities between 1910 and 1970.

The Bringing Them Home report found that the forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families and communities has had life-long and profoundly disabling consequences for those taken, and has negatively affected the entire Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. For many of the children, removal caused them to lose all connection to family, traditional land, culture and language. Many children were taken to homes and institutions where they were often abused, neglected and unloved.

“It never goes away. Just ‘cause we’re not walking around on crutches or with bandages or plasters on our legs and arms, doesn’t mean we’re not hurting. Just ‘cause you can’t see it doesn’t mean... I suspect I’ll carry these sorts of wounds ‘til the day I die. I’d just like it to be not quite as intense, that’s all.” (Confidential Evidence 580, Queensland Bringing Them Home Report.)

The reality of Australia’s Stolen Generations is not a thing of the distant past. Children were being inappropriately removed from their families by Australian authorities until 1970. Many people affected by the tragedy of the Stolen Generations are still alive today and live with its effects. The Bringing Them Home report suggested that the first step in healing is the acknowledgment of truth and the delivery of an apology. The release of the report was followed by a wave of apologies to the Stolen Generations by state parliaments, judges, churches, civic associations, trade unions and ethnic groups. However, it remained the responsibility of the Australian Government, on behalf of previous Australian Governments who administered this wrongful policy, to acknowledge what was done and apologise for it.

“This issue is a ‘blank spot’ in the history of Australia. The damage and trauma these policies caused are felt every day by Aboriginal people. They internalise their grief, guilt and confusion, inflicting further pain on themselves and others around them. It is about time the Australian Government openly accepted responsibility for their actions and compensate those affected.” (Archie Roach and Ruby Hunter in Buti A, Bringing Them Home the ALSA Way)

The event on 12th February provides the opportunity to collectively have one voice in response to the progress achieved since Apology Day. There will be opportunities for healing, celebration, smoking ceremonies and quiet reflection.
The event will include the following and all members of the public are welcome to attend.

- Welcome to Country
- Food & drinks
- Music, song and dance
- Cultural Dancing
- Information Stalls & Activities

-ends-

About Relationships Australia South Australia

Supporting you through change

As an independent, not-for-profit organisation, we support our work involves improving the health and wellbeing of people by providing a broad of range services including counselling, post adoption support, gambling help, post separation services and much more to individuals, couples, families, children, young people, schools and communities.

Our registered training organisation, the Australian Institute of Social Relations offers courses and nationally recognised qualifications to the community and health industries and the family law system.

For more information about how we can support you through change, call 1300 364 277 or visit our website www.rasa.org.au

For media enquiries or further information, please contact:

Naomi Ebert Smith
Manager Communications and Development Unit
Direct: 08 8216 5227
Mobile: 0416 130 098