

Child Welfare timeline

Major events and legislation in the history of child welfare in Australia

Select a state to filter on:

- 2023

2023 – Inquiry into past forced adoptive policies and practices, Western Australian government

The Western Australian government's Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs commenced an inquiry into past forced adoptive policies and practices on 22 February 2023. The impetus for this inquiry was a petition with 318 signatures, presented by Jennifer McRae and tabled in the Legislative Council on 15 November 2022. The terms of reference for the inquiry were : To inquire into the past adoptive policies and practices of the twentieth century, notably the years between 1939 and 1980. In particular, the Committee will seek to: 1. understand the lived experiences of those affected by historical forced adoption practices 2....

[Continue reading](#)

- 2022

2022 – Stolen Generations Reparations Package, Victorian government

The Stolen Generations Reparation Package was announced by the Victorian government in 2022. The aim of the package is to “help address the trauma and suffering caused by the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families, community, culture, identity and language”. The package is for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who were removed from their families in Victoria before 31 December 1976, and who were separated from their families for a period of time resulting in the loss of family, community, culture, identity and language. If found to be eligible, applicants can receive a lump sum payment of...

[Continue reading](#)

- 2021

2021 – Territories Stolen Generations Redress Scheme, Australian government

The Territories Stolen Generations Redress Scheme was announced in 2021. The Scheme “seeks to recognise the harm and trauma experienced by Stolen Generations survivors”. The Territories Stolen Generations Redress Scheme is for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who were children when removed from their families and communities, in: Northern Territory before 1 July 1978 Australian Capital Territory before 11 May 1989 Jervis Bay Territory The Scheme offers redress payments of up to \$75,000, a healing assistance payment of \$7000 and a personal acknowledgement if the applicant wishes. The Scheme is administered by the National Indigenous Australians Agency. The Scheme...

[Continue reading](#)

- May

28, 2019

May 28, 2019 – Inquiry into Responses to Historical Forced Adoptions in Victoria

The Inquiry into Responses to Historical Forced Adoptions in Victoria began in 2019 when the Victorian Legislative Assembly agreed to an inquiry into support services and responses to the issues of historical forced adoptions in Victoria by the Legal and Social Issues Committee. The report was tabled in Parliament on 8 September 2021. According to the Report published in August 2021, the Committee interpreted the terms of reference ‘to broadly imply what measures or avenues for recourse, if any, have been implemented to support mothers and others who were also subject to the former policies and practices of forced adoption....

[Continue reading](#)

- 2019

2019 – Payment scheme for former British Child Migrants, UK government

In December 2018, the UK government announced they were establishing a payment scheme for former British Child Migrants. The scheme was for people who had been separated from their families and sent overseas as part of the UK government's participation in child migration programs. The payment scheme was established in response to the Interim Report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and in particular, its report into Child Migration Programmes. The UK government stated that the payments were being made to recognise the "harm done to eligible former British child migrants in being separated from their families and...

[Continue reading](#)

- 22

October 2018

22 October 2018 – – National Apology to Victims and Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse, Parliament of Australia

On 22 October 2018, the Prime Minister, the Hon Scott Morrison MP, apologised to victims and survivors of institutional child sexual abuse on behalf of the Australian Government, and all Australians. The Prime Minister apologised for the appalling endured by survivors of institutional child sexual abuse, and acknowledged the longlasting effects of this abuse. The Apology was part of the Australian Government's response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The Apology stated that: Today, we apologise for the pain, suffering and trauma inflicted upon victims and survivors as children, and for its...

[Continue reading](#)

- 2018

2018 – National Redress Scheme, Australian government

The National Redress Scheme was established by the Commonwealth government in response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. It is administered by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services. The NRS was established in 2018 and was announced that it would run for 10 years. The National Redress Scheme was established to recognise the sexual abuse that many children experienced in Australian institutions, and to acknowledge the ongoing impact and suffering as a result of this abuse. Under the NRS, people can apply for redress if they experienced sexual abuse in an institution...

[Continue reading](#)

- 2017

2017 – Child Migration Programmes Investigation, UK Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse

As part of the UK Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, which ran from 2015-2022, the Inquiry investigated child migration programs to Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Zimbabwe. Research and hearings took place in 2017, and the Investigation Report was published in March 2018. The Inquiry asked a series of questions about child migration schemes, focussing on how much the sending agencies and government in the UK knew about conditions and abuse in Australia, and whether they responded appropriately at the time. It heard evidence from former child migrants, the sending agencies, and the UK government who oversaw the child...

[Continue reading](#)

- 2017

2017 – Stolen Generations Reparations Scheme, New South

Wales government

The New South Wales Stolen Generations Reparations Scheme was established in 2017. It was created in response to the New South Wales government's 2016 report, Unfinished Business, which recommended that a reparations scheme be established. The Stolen Generations Reparations Scheme provided ex-gratia payments of \$75,000 to "living Stolen Generations survivors who were removed by, committed to, or otherwise came into the care of the New South Wales Aborigines Protection or Welfare Boards under the Aborigines Protection Act 1909, up until the Act was repealed on 2 June 1969". A funeral assistance fund was also available and provided a one-off payment...

[Continue reading](#)

- 2016

– 2017

2016 – 2017 – Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory

The Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory was set up on 1 August 2016, to look into the youth detention and welfare system over 10 years from 1 August 2006. Its report was delivered on 17 November 2017. The Royal Commission identified a number of failures within the detention and welfare systems in the Northern Territory and recommended a large number of reforms. In March 2018, the Territory Government announced it would accept the intent and direction of all 227 Royal Commission recommendations.

[Continue reading](#)

- 2015

2015 – Stolen Generations Reparations Scheme, South Australian government

The Stolen Generations Reparations Scheme was established by the South Australian government in 2015. The Scheme was for South Australian members of the Stolen Generations who were forcibly removed from their families and culture. Under the criteria of the Scheme, people who were Aboriginal and removed from their families in South Australia before 31 December 1975, were eligible for the Scheme. After receiving applications from people who were initially removed from the Northern Territory but who were then moved to

South Australia by welfare authorities, the criteria were amended to include these people too. In 2018, applicants found to be...

[Continue reading](#)



- 21

March 2013



21 March 2013 – – National Apology for Forced Adoptions, Parliament of Australia

On 21 March 2013, the Prime Minister Julia Gillard apologised on behalf of the Australian Government to people affected by forced adoption or removal policies and practices. The national apology was delivered in the Great Hall of Parliament House, Canberra.

[Continue reading](#)

- 27

November 2012

27 November 2012 – 27 November

2012 – Apology for past forced adoption practices, Parliament of Queensland

On 27 November 2012, the Queensland government apologised for the hurt and harm caused by past forced adoption policies and practice. The Apology was issued by the Premier, Campbell Newman MP, on behalf of the Queensland Legislative Assembly. The apology reflected the recommendation made by the Australian Government Senate Committee Inquiry on the Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices that a formal statement of apology be issued by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments to people affected by forced adoptions.

[Continue reading](#)



- 25

October 2012



25 October 2012 – – Parliamentary Apology for Past Adoption Practices, Parliament of Victoria

On 25 October 2012 at 11.30 am, the Premier of Victoria, Ted Baillieu, Opposition leader Daniel Andrews and Nationals leader Peter Ryan addressed a joint sitting of the Victorian Parliament to apologise officially to all those who were affected by the forced adoption practices in the state between the 1950s and the 1970s. The Apology was an outcome of the Federal Senate Inquiry into forced adoption practices, which found that up to 250,000 babies were forcibly removed from their predominantly young mothers.

[Continue reading](#)



- 18

October 2012



18 October 2012 – 18 October 2012 – Apology to People Hurt by Past Forced Adoption Practices, Parliament of Tasmania

The Apology to People Hurt by Past Forced Adoption Practices was moved in the Tasmanian House of Assembly on Thursday, 18 October 2012 by the Labor Premier, Lara Giddings. The 2012 report on the Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee's Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices prompted the Apology. A number of other members of the House, including the Leaders of the Liberal Opposition and the Greens, supported the move. In her speech, Giddings directed the apology to mothers and children as well as fathers and other family members affected by the forced adoption practices of the past,...

[Continue reading](#)

- 29

September 2012

29 September 2012 – – Apology for Forced Adoption Practices, Parliament of New South Wales

On Thursday 20 September 2012 both Houses of the New South Wales Parliament apologised for forced adoption practices. The motion read as follows: "This House acknowledges the traumatic effects of the forced adoption practices of the past that have echoed through the lives of tens of thousands of mothers, fathers, people adopted as children and their families; and All Members of this House, with profound sadness and remorse, say to those living with the ongoing grief and pain of forced adoption practices, that we are sorry".

[Continue reading](#)



• 19

September 2012



19 September 2012 – – Apology to the victims of abuse at St Andrew's Hostel, Katanning, Government of Western Australia

On 19 September 2012, the report from the Special Inquiry into St Andrew's Hostel, Katanning was tabled in the Western Australian parliament. Its report documented the failure of public officers to act on reports of abuse at St Andrew's Hostel in the years 1973 to 1990. Allegations of abuse at St Christopher's Hostel and Adamson

House in Northam, Hardie House in South Hedland, Craig House in Bunbury and Narrogin Hostel also surfaced during the Inquiry. The government accepted all recommendations from the Inquiry and established an ex gratia payment scheme to assist victims. As part of the report tabling, the...

[Continue reading](#)

- 14

August 2012

14 August 2012 – – Apology to People Affected by Past Forced Adoption Practices, Parliament of the Australian Capital Territory

The ACT Chief Minister Katy Gallagher presented a formal apology to people who have been affected by past forced adoption practices in Australia from the late 1940s through to the 1980s on the 14th August 2012 at the ACT Legislative Assembly in Canberra. The apology by the ACT Government acknowledged that Commonwealth policies significantly affected people within the Canberra community. This is the text of the formal apology made by the ACT Chief Minister Katy Gallagher in the ACT Legislative Assembly on the 14th of August 2012: The ACT Legislative Assembly acknowledges, with deep regret, that past practices of forced...

[Continue reading](#)



- 17

April 2012



17 April 2012 – 2013 – Inquiry into the handling of child abuse by religious and other organisations, State of Victoria

On 17 April 2012 the Victorian Government announced the establishment of a Parliamentary inquiry into 'matters relating to the handling of alleged child abuse by religious and other organisations'. In response to Recommendation 48 of the Cummins Inquiry, the Family and Community Development Committee is requested 'to inquire into, consider and report to the Parliament on the processes by which religious and other non-government organisations respond to the criminal abuse of children by personnel within their organisations'. The terms of reference include: 1. the practices, policies and protocols in such organisations for the handling of allegations of criminal abuse...

[Continue reading](#)



- 2012

– 2017



2012 – 2017 – Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Commonwealth Government

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse was announced on 12 November 2012 by Prime Minister Julia Gillard. Its terms of reference were wide-ranging, examining how institutions had responded to child sexual abuse, both in the past and present. The Royal Commission investigated a wide range of institutions including religious organisations, state care providers, not-for-profit bodies, child service agencies and the police. This included investigating the responses of institutions who were responsible for Homes and other residential institutions. The Royal Commission's work operated across three channels: private sessions, public and private hearings for case studies, and a...

[Continue reading](#)

- December

2011 –

December 2011 – August 2012 – Special Inquiry into St Andrew's Hostel, Katanning, Western Australia

The Special Inquiry into St Andrew's Hostel in Katanning was undertaken in 2011-12. The Inquiry was established under Section 24H(2) of the Public Sector Management Act 1994, to examine the conduct and response of public officials and government agencies to allegations of sexual abuse at St Andrew's and related organisations. The Hon. Peter Blaxell, a former Supreme Court Judge, was appointed as Special Inquirer. Background The Country High Schools Hostels Authority governed the operations of education hostels such as St Andrew's across Western Australia. The Warden of St Andrew's Hostel from 1975 to 1990 was Dennis McKenna. His brother, Neil...

[Continue reading](#)

- 2011

– 2012

2011 – 2012 – Inquiry into Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices, Commonwealth of Australia

The Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices was a Senate Committee Inquiry that began in 2011. The Inquiry resulted from the efforts over many years of mothers who were separated from their children by adoption. The Senate Committee invited interested individuals and organisations to make submissions. It reported in February 2012. The terms of reference were: The role, if any,

of the Commonwealth Government, its policies and practices in contributing to forced adoption; and The potential role of the Commonwealth in developing a national framework to assist states and territories to address the consequences for the mothers,...

[Continue reading](#)

- 19

October 2010

19 October 2010 – – Apology for the Removal of Children from Unmarried Mothers, Parliament of Western Australia

The Parliament of Western Australia formally apologised for the 'Removal of Children from Unmarried Mothers' in 2010. It was the first Australian parliament to do so. The Parliament, on behalf of previous governments, apologised to 'the mothers, their children and the families who were adversely affected by these past adoption practices'. The apology was heard by a large number of those mothers and families in the public gallery.

[Continue reading](#)

- 24

February 2010

24 February 2010 – – Apology to Former Child Migrants by the British Government

On 24 February 2010, the British Prime Minister Gordon Brown issued an apology to child migrants, for the United Kingdom's role in deporting thousands of children to Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and Zimbabwe. Some former child migrants were funded by the British Government to go to London and hear the Prime Minister's statement in person. In his statement, Mr Brown said: To all those former child migrants and their families... We are truly sorry. They were let down. We are sorry they were allowed to be sent away at the time when they were most vulnerable. We are...

[Continue reading](#)

-

November 2009

16 November 2009 – – Apology to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants, Parliament of Australia

On 16 November 2009, the Australian Parliament issued an apology to Forgotten Australians and former child migrants. The Apology in November 2009 was an endorsement of Recommendation 1 from the 'Forgotten Australians' report of 2004, which read: That the Commonwealth Government issue a formal statement acknowledging, on behalf of the nation, the hurt and distress suffered by many children in institutional care, particularly the children who were victims of abuse and assault; and apologising for the harm caused to these children. In 2005, the Federal Government made the following response to this recommendation: The Australian Government has great sympathy for...

[Continue reading](#)

- 19

September 2009

19 September 2009 – – Apology to Forgotten Australians and Child Migrants, Parliament of New South Wales

On 19 September 2009 then New South Wales Premier, Nathan Rees, held a special ceremony in the Botanic Gardens to formally apologise to the state's Forgotten Australians and child migrants. Mr Rees and then Community Services Minister Linda Burney unveiled a memorial as 'a lasting tribute to the children who suffered in care in NSW'. The Sydney Morning Herald reported that: Apologising to all those who suffered, [Premier Rees] said: 'I say on behalf of the government, I am sorry for any hurt and distress you suffered in the care of the state. This should never have happened. 'I'm sorry...

[Continue reading](#)



February 2008



13 February 2008 – – Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples, Parliament of Australia

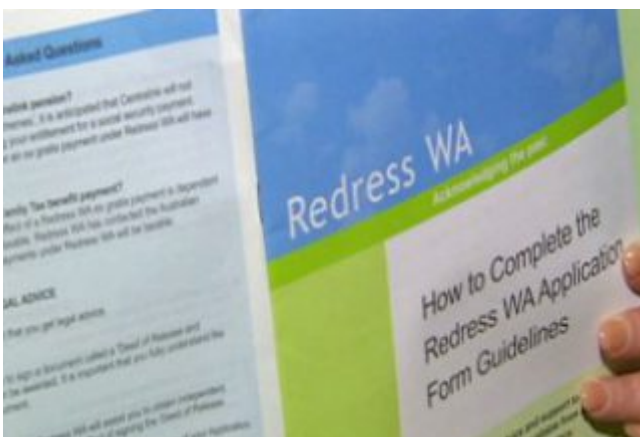
On 13 February 2008, then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd opened the Parliament of Australia by apologising to the Indigenous peoples of Australia. The Prime Minister said: We apologise for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians. We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country. For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry. To the mothers and the fathers, the...

[Continue reading](#)



- 2008

– 2011



2008 – 2011 – Redress WA, State of Western Australia

The Redress WA scheme was established by the Government of Western Australia to acknowledge and apologise to adults who, as children, were abused and/or neglected while they were in the care of the state. It ran from 2008 to 31 December 2011. The Redress WA scheme ran from 2008 to 31 December 2011. When Redress WA commenced it was announced that the payments would go up to \$80,000, however they were reduced in 2009 to \$45,000. Following the close of the scheme, early evaluation of the applications shows a large number of the claims are severe. Because of this and...

[Continue reading](#)

- 2008

– 2009

2008 – 2009 – Inquiry into the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Lost Innocents and Forgotten Australians Reports, Parliament of Australia

The Inquiry into the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Lost Innocents and Forgotten Australians Reports, which began in 2008, was conducted by the Senate's Community Affairs References Committee. Its report *Lost Innocents and Forgotten Australians Revisited*, was released in June 2009. In September 2008, the Senate referred the following matter to the Community Affairs Committee for inquiry and report: Progress with the implementation of the recommendations in the reports by the Community Affairs References Committee, *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record*, a report on child migration tabled in August 2001, and *Forgotten Australians*, a report on Australians who experienced institutional...

[Continue reading](#)

- 9

August 2006

9 August 2006 – – Victorian

Government Apology to Forgotten Australians

On 9 August 2006, the Premier Steve Bracks delivered an apology to Forgotten Australians on behalf of the Victorian Government. The Victorian Government apologised to Forgotten Australians on 9 August 2006. This is the text of the apology, which was presented by the Premier Steve Bracks: The government of Victoria welcomes the report of the Senate Community Affairs References Committee, Forgotten Australians, which was tabled in the Senate on 30 August 2004, as it offers an opportunity to offer a public statement of apology about some of the past practices in the provision of out-of-home care services in Victoria. The...

[Continue reading](#)

- 2005

–

2005 – – Apology to Former Wards of State Abused in Care, State Government of Tasmania

The State Government Apology to Former Wards of State Abused in Care was made as a motion to the House of Assembly by the Premier, Paul Lennon, on 17 May 2005. The Leaders of the Opposition and Greens as well as a number of other members spoke. The motion was carried by all. Lennon's words were: I move that this House: (1.) acknowledges and accepts that many children in the care of the State were abused by those who were meant to care for them and provide a safe and secure home life; (2.) apologises to the victims and expresses...

[Continue reading](#)

- 2004

– 2008

2004 – 2008 – Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry, South Australia

The Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry began in November 2004 under the terms of The Commission of Inquiry (Children in State Care) Act 2004. It produced its final report in March 2008. The terms of reference of the Inquiry were to investigate allegations of sexual abuse of children in State care and allegations of criminal conduct resulting in the death of children in State care. The Honourable EP Mullighan

QC began his role as Commissioner role in December 2004. During the Inquiry 792 people sat with Commissioner Mullighan and told of incidents of child sexual abuse. These hearings...

[Continue reading](#)

- 2003
- 2005

2003 – 2005 – Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care, Parliament of Australia

The Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care was referred to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee on 4 March 2003. This inquiry was directed primarily to those affected children who were not covered by the 2001 report *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record*, inquiring into child migrants, and the 1997 report, *Bringing them Home*, inquiring into Aboriginal children. The Committee released its first report from the inquiry on 30 August 2004, *Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children*. A second report, *Protecting vulnerable children: A national challenge*, was released on 17 March 2005. The...

[Continue reading](#)

- 2003
- 2006

2003 – 2006 – Listen to the children: review of claims of abuse from adults in state care as children, Ombudsman Tasmania

Listen to the children: review of claims of abuse from adults in state care as children was an Ombudsman inquiry. It was established in July 2003 by the Tasmanian government. The inquiry made an initial report in 2004, followed by another in 2006. On 11 July 2003, the ABC Television current affairs program, *Stateline*, featured an interview with a former ward of state who alleged that he was sexually abused by a foster parent who, at the time, had already been convicted of paedophilia. The *Listen to the Children* inquiry was announced by David Llewellyn, the Minister for Health and...

[Continue reading](#)



- 2000

– 2001



2000 – 2001 – Inquiry Into Child Migration, Parliament of Australia

On 20 June 2000, on the motion of Senator Andrew Murray, the Senate referred the issue of child migration to the Community Affairs References Committee for inquiry and report. An estimated five to ten thousand child migrants from both Britain and Malta came to Australia between 1922 and 1967, most of whom were sent to charitable and religious institutions. Many child migrants later claimed that they were ill-treated in the institutions to which they were sent. The resulting report 'Lost innocents: righting the record – inquiry into child migration' was tabled on 30 August 2001. During the 1980s and 1990s, details...

[Continue reading](#)

- 1999

–

1999 – – Apology to those harmed in Queensland institutions during their childhood

In 1999, the Queensland government and church authorities issued an Apology to those who were harmed or suffered abuse in church- and state-run institutions during their childhood. The Apology was in response to the findings of the Forde Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions. It accepted the findings of the Forde Commission and apologised to “all those people who suffered in any way while resident in our facilities, and express deep sorrow and regret at the hurt and distress suffered by those who were victims of abuse”. The Apology was co-signed by the Premier of Queensland,...

[Continue reading](#)



- 13

August 1998



13 August 1998 – – Apology to Former Child Migrants by the Parliament of Western Australia

On 13 August 1998, the Parliament of Western Australia passed a motion to apologise to former child migrants ‘for the past policies that led to their forced migration and the subsequent maltreatment so many experienced, and express deep regret at the hurt and distress that this caused.’ Many members of Parliament spoke in support of this motion.

[Continue reading](#)

-



1998

– 1999



1998 – 1999 – Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions

In August 1998 in Queensland, the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care established a Commission of Inquiry to examine whether there had been any abuse, mistreatment or neglect of children in Queensland institutions. This Inquiry is widely known as the Forde Inquiry, in reference to the Chairperson, Leneen Forde. In May 1999, the Committee presented its report. It found numerous incidents of unsafe, improper and illegal treatment of children in Queensland institutions, including cases of sexual, physical, emotional and systems abuse. The Queensland government made its response to the recommendations of the Inquiry in August 1999. The government, in...

[Continue reading](#)

• 17

September 1997

17 September 1997 – – Victorian Government Apology to the Stolen Generations

On 17 September 1997, Premier Kennett issued an apology in the Legislative Assembly to the Aboriginal people for the past policies leading to the removal of Aboriginal children from their families and communities. The apology began with the words: That this house apologises to the Aboriginal people on behalf of all Victorians for the past policies under which Aboriginal children were removed from their families and expresses

deep regret at the hurt and distress this has caused and reaffirms its support for reconciliation between all Australians.

[Continue reading](#)

- 1997

–

1997 – – Apology to Aboriginal People, Government of Tasmania

The Apology to Aboriginal People was made by the Premier, Tony Rundle, on 13 August 1997 in response to the Bringing them home report. An Aboriginal elder, Annette Peardon, replied to the apology. Rundle's motion stated that: (1) That this Parliament, on behalf of all Tasmanians, expresses its deep and sincere regrets at the hurt and distress caused by past policies under which Aboriginal children were removed from their families and homes, apologises to the Aboriginal people for those past actions and reaffirms its support for reconciliation between all Australians. (2) That at the conclusion of the debate on the...

[Continue reading](#)

- July

1997 –

July 1997 – 23 July 1998 – Inquiry into the Welfare of Former British Child Migrants, House of Commons Health Committee, Parliament of the United Kingdom

An Inquiry into the Welfare of Former British Child Migrants was undertaken by the Parliament of the United Kingdom's House of Commons Health Committee in 1997-98. In relation to Australia, the Inquiry was most interested in the fate of children who were sent from Britain in the twentieth century. The inquiry and its report (known as 'Health Committee – Third Report' 1998) focused on: The experiences of people who had been sent to Australia as child migrants The role of the 'sending' agencies at the time of sending and at the time of the inquiry The role of 'receiving' agencies...

[Continue reading](#)

•

June 1997

18 June 1997 – – Apology to the Aboriginal people of Australia for the separation of children from their families, Parliament of New South Wales

On 18 June 1997 then New South Wales Premier, Bob Carr issued an unreserved apology to the Aboriginal people of the state of New South Wales for the policies and practices that led to the removal of generations of Aboriginal children from their families. This was the first response by an Australian state government to the Bringing them home report, which had revealed the magnitude of the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families in the 20th century. The Australian Capital Territory Government had moved its apology a day previously, on 17 June 1997. The motion...

[Continue reading](#)

- 28

May 1997

28 May 1997 – – Apology to Aboriginal Families by the Parliament of Western Australia

On 28 May 1997, the Parliament of Western Australia passed a motion to apologise to Aboriginal families in Western Australia 'for the past policies under which Aboriginal children were removed' from them and expressed 'deep regret at the hurt and distress that this caused.' Many members of Parliament spoke in support of this motion.

[Continue reading](#)

-



1995

– 1997



1995 – 1997 – National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission

The National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families was established by the Federal Attorney-General in 1995. It was conducted by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC). In April 1997, the Commission handed down the report, *Bringing them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families* containing 54 recommendations. The basic terms of reference for the Commission were to inquire into and report on the following matters: a) what were the laws, policies and practices that resulted in the removal...

[Continue reading](#)

- 1989

–

1989 – – Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is an international convention, setting out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of children. The General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 20 November 1989 (the 30th anniversary of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child). The Convention came into force in September 1990. The Convention was ratified by Australia in 1990. Click [here](#) to see the full Find & Connect glossary

[Continue reading](#)

- 1982
- 1985

1982 – 1985 – Inquiry into Children in Institutional and Other Forms of Care, Commonwealth of Australia

In May 1982, an inquiry began by the Senate Standing Committee on Social Welfare. The result of this inquiry was the report, 'Children in Institutional and Other Forms of Care: a national perspective' (1985). The Committee noted that little work had been done to date in this area, on a national basis. The Committee's terms of reference included an examination of the changing direction of and attitudes towards institutional care. One factor behind the inquiry was the finding by a previous committee in 1982 that many youth with a background of institutional care subsequently became homeless.

[Continue reading](#)



- 1973
- 1977



1973 – 1977 – Supporting Mother's Benefit

The Supporting Mother's Benefit was a Commonwealth allowance introduced in 1973 by the Whitlam government. It extended equal access to income support to all single mothers. In November 1977, it was replaced by the Supporting Parent's Benefit, with sole fathers becoming eligible for payments. This payment made it possible for many single mothers to keep their children and played a significant role in adoption rates declining dramatically in Australia after 1973. A number of submissions to the Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices Senate inquiry (2011-2012) showed that lack of financial support was a key factor for...

[Continue reading](#)

- 1966

– 1969

1966 – 1969 – Committee of inquiry into allegations of neglect and maltreatment of young children, State of Victoria

The state government of Victoria established the inter departmental committee of inquiry into allegations of neglect and maltreatment of young children to investigate claims made in articles published in the Medical Journal of Australia in 1966. The committee was set up in December 1966 and first reported in December 1967. A second report was delivered in 1969. The articles published in the Medical Journal of Australia in 1966 were some of the earliest research into what became termed as 'child abuse'. Dora Bialestock's research concerned babies admitted to Allambie Reception Centre, and Drs Robert and John Birrell reported on eight...

[Continue reading](#)



- 1959

–



1959 – – Declaration of the Rights of the Child

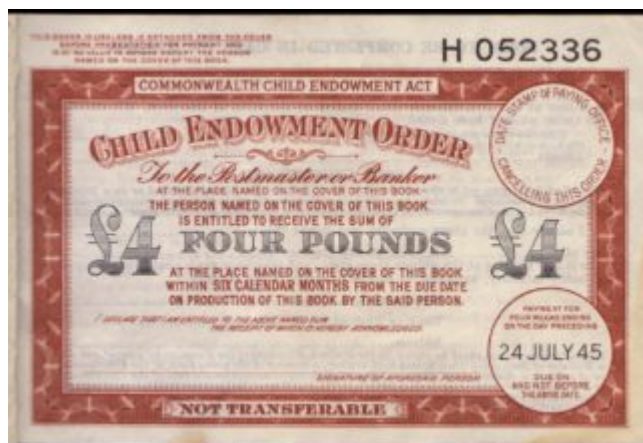
The Declaration of the Rights of the Child set out ten principles related to children's rights. The Declaration was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 November 1959. Click [here](#) to see the full Find & Connect glossary

[Continue reading](#)



- 1941

– 1976



1941 – 1976 – Child Endowment Act 1941, Commonwealth of Australia

The Child Endowment Act 1941 was Commonwealth legislation which introduced the payment of weekly sums to mothers with more than one child, foster mothers, and the managers of privately run children's institutions, for children under the age of 16. When child endowment began in 1941, children in State or Commonwealth institutions were excluded. From July 1942, child endowment was extended to children living in government-run institutions, and Aboriginal children living on missions. The act was repealed by the Social Services Consolidation Act 1947. Child endowment payments were replaced by the family allowance in 1976.

[Continue reading](#)

-

1939

– 1945

1939 – 1945 – World War Two

The significance of World War Two, and the role this event plays in the history of the institutional 'care' of Australian children is an emerging area of research. It is evident that World War Two, directly or indirectly, was a factor in thousands of children's placement in 'care' in the mid-twentieth century. The Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA) submitted to the Senate inquiry of 2009 about the impact of World War Two on Australian social conditions, and the consequences for many families: Many of the children were in these institutions because their parents were, or had been, in the armed...

[Continue reading](#)

- 1932

– 1969

1932 – 1969 – Deserted Wives and Children Ordinance 1932, Australian Capital Territory

The Deserted Wives and Children Ordinance 1932 (Act no. 16/1932) is an ordinance to amend the Deserted Wives and Children Act 1901 of the State of New South Wales, in its application to the Territory. It was passed on 4 August 1932 and repealed by the Maintenance Act 1968 on 1 January 1969. As this ordinance was repealed before 11 May 1989 it did not become an ACT Act.

[Continue reading](#)



- 1929

– 1932



1929 – 1932 – The Great Depression

The Great Depression, generally accepted as beginning with the stock market crash in the United States of America in October 1929, was a time of hardship for many people in Australia. By 1932, about 30% of Australian workers were unemployed. The high unemployment and poverty during this period had a great social impact, with many families affected. Single parents as well as many married couples struggled to support and provide for their children. In terms of children in 'care', the Depression increased the demand for places in orphanages. Child welfare departments also found it more difficult to find suitable homes...

[Continue reading](#)

- 1920

1920 – Royal Commission on State Children's Department and Charities Department, State of Western Australia

A Royal Commission was appointed to examine the State Children Department and Charities Department, and report on "the working and management thereof, and any improvements which ought to be made in such working and management" (Final Report, Royal Commission on State Children's Department and Charities Department, p.2). The commission held 42 sittings and examined 77 witnesses. The final report covered a number of areas, from the logistics around paying and receiving support payments, the qualifications and training provided to officers of the Department, to the care of children with intellectual disabilities, and responding to claims of child slavery at Fairbridge...

[Continue reading](#)

- 1914
- 1918

1914 – 1918 – World War One

The significance of World War One, and the role this event plays in the history of the institutional 'care' of Australian children is an emerging area of research. Clearly, the departure of thousands of Australian men to fight with Britain had a great impact on society, families, and children. Many households had to adjust to the absence of male breadwinners (be it temporary or permanent). In the post-war period, the profound impacts of battle on many former servicemen flowed on to affect their wives and children. Many residents of orphanages

enlisted to fight in the War. Annual reports from institutions...

[Continue reading](#)

- 1896
- 1995

1896 – 1995 – Adoption of Children Act 1896, Western Australia

The Adoption of Children Act 1896 (1896/006) made it possible to legally adopt a child under the age of 15 years in Western Australia. The Act was amended throughout the twentieth century and was eventually repealed by the Adoption Act 1994. The Adoption of Children Act 1896 came into operation on 23 September 1896. It enabled children under the age of 15 years to be legally adopted. In introducing the Adoption of Children Bill to the Legislative Council (Hansard, 12 August 1896, pp.334-335), the Minister for Mines, the Hon EH Wittenoom, said that it was not a government Bill. Rather,...

[Continue reading](#)

- 1895
- 1959

1895 – 1959 – The State Children Act 1895, Northern Territory

The State Children Act 1895 (Act no. 641/1895) was passed on 20 December 1895. Its full title was 'An Act to amend the Law relating to State Children, and for other purposes'. It was repealed by the Child Welfare Ordinance 1958 (Act No.20/1958) on 2 February 1959. During the period 1863 to 1911 when the Northern Territory was annexed to South Australia, all South Australian legislation also applied to the Northern Territory. The State Children Act (SA) established the State Children's Council. The Council was responsible for the care of State children and the management and control of their property....

[Continue reading](#)

- 1865
- 1911

1865 – 1911 – Industrial and Reformatory Schools Act 1865, Queensland

The Industrial and Reformatory Schools Act 1865 – with the full title “An Act to provide for the establishment of Industrial and Reformatory Schools” (Act no. 8/1865, 29 Vic No.8) set up special schools to educate and care for neglected children and young offenders under the age of 15 years. The Act allowed Indigenous children to be sent to industrial schools or reformatories on the ground of ‘neglect’. Simply being Aboriginal was proof of neglect. For the purposes of the Act, missions were declared to be industrial schools or reformatories to which Indigenous children could be sent. The act was...

[Continue reading](#)

- 1864
- 1888

1864 – 1888 – The Neglected and Criminal Children’s Act 1864, Victoria

The Neglected and Criminal Children’s Act 1864 (No.216) was the first piece of Victorian legislation to define situations where children might be removed from their parents. The Act provided for the establishment of industrial schools for ‘neglected’ children and reformatory schools for convicted juveniles. Superintendents and matrons were to be appointed and provision was made for inspection and reporting. Most industrial schools established in Victoria under the new act were government-run, however the legislation also provided for the creation of privately run industrial schools. Three private industrial schools were established: St Joseph’s Industrial School for Catholic girls in Geelong, the...

[Continue reading](#)

- 1863
- 1867

1863 – 1867 – Industrial Schools Act 1863, Tasmania

The Industrial Schools Act 1863 (Act no. 27 Vict. No.24) established the Hobart Town Female Refuge (also known as the Hobart Girls’ Industrial School) before being repealed and replaced in 1867 by a new Industrial Schools Act (Act no.31 Vict. No.37). This act enabled female children between 12 and 16 years to be detained

in the Hobart Town Female Refuge. Children deemed uncontrollable, neglected or who had been convicted of an offence were regularly placed in this institution.

[Continue reading](#)

- 1844
- 1911

1844 – 1911 – Aboriginal Orphans Act 1844, South Australia

The Aboriginal Orphans Act (No 12 of 7 and 8 Vic, 1844) was passed and commenced on 28 August 1844. Its full title was: An Ordinance to Provide for the Protection, Maintenance, and Up-Bringing of Orphans and other Destitute Children of the Aborigines. It was repealed by the Aborigines Act 1911 on 7 December 1911. The Aboriginal Orphans Act 1844 allowed the Protector of Aborigines to apprentice out orphan Aboriginal children and, with parental consent, other Aboriginal children until the age of 21. It gave the Protector of Aborigines the right to visit children and to penalise employers who mistreated...

[Continue reading](#)



- 1842
- 1964



1842 – 1964 – Guardians to Child

Immigrants Act, Western Australia

The Guardians to Child Immigrants Act 1842 (6 Vict. No.8) was to regulate the treatment of young people under the age of 21 ('juvenile immigrants') coming as unaccompanied migrants to be apprenticed in the Colony. A guardian would be appointed for all such people, and that guardian was expected to exercise control over 'the moral, religious and technical instruction, the health, comfort, and general treatment of all such immigrants ... during their apprenticeship' (s.7). A schedule to the Act included a Form of a Deed of Apprenticeship. The Guardians to Child Immigrants Act 1842 was repealed by the Statute Law...

[Continue reading](#)

- 1826

– 1881

1826 – 1881 – Orphan School Estates Act 1826, New South Wales

The Orphan School Estates Act 1826, also known as An Act for Vesting the Orphan School Estates in the Trustees of the Clergy and School Lands in the Colony of New South Wales and for duly governing the Children at School and in Apprenticeship (7 George 4, Act No 4, 1826), established rules for the management of the Orphan Schools and nominated the Madras system of education. The apprenticeship system already being used in the Colony was regulated and a system for dealing with disputes between apprentices and their employers was established. The Act also diverted some money from Orphan...

[Continue reading](#)

You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/cw-timeline/>