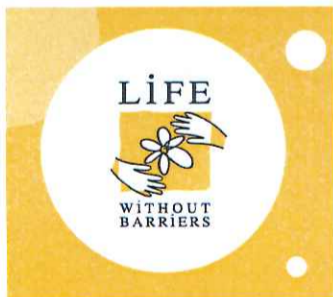


Date: 27.11.2012

Exhibit number: 124

ADVERTORIAL



Ms Libby Leu
Ms Leith Sterling
Paul Testro Consultancy Services
Ms Vanessa Walker
Ms Shirley Duckett



To Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of Queensland

On behalf of Queenslanders, thank you for inviting us to join you in commemorating National Sorry Day. We know that today marks a solemn occasion for you – the anniversary of the day on which findings of the *National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families* was tabled in Federal Parliament in 1997.

The Inquiry's *Bringing Them Home* Report told all Australians what you already knew. In a vivid and stark way, it told us about the cruelty of government policies of the past that led to the forced removal of thousands of children, policies that left none of your families or communities untouched by the devastation that followed. The veil that had been placed over the 150 year era of the Stolen Generations that continued unabated until the early 1980s was finally lifted.

We, the signatories to this letter, are a mix of non-government organisations involved in providing services to Queensland children and families as well as peak bodies, businesses and individuals with an interest in social justice and the well-being of all citizens of our State. In a strong combined voice, we say to you – the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander citizens of Queensland – that we are sorry. We are sorry for the injustices of the past that you have suffered and any part that we or our predecessors played in the forced removal of your children, the separation of your families and the breaking of connections to your land and culture.

We are sorry for the legacy of these policies and the ongoing impact they have on your families and communities today. We know that too many of your children continue to die in their infancy and your elderly are suffering from preventable illnesses and are dying too young. We know that too many of your people do not enjoy the same level of social and economic advantage experienced by others. We know that far too many of your children and young people continue to be removed from the care of their families or are spending time in youth detention centres. Sadly, we know all too well that the trauma and pain of the Stolen Generations era is still raw in the hearts and minds of many.

Whilst today we acknowledge your suffering, we also celebrate the fact that you are still here despite the concerted efforts made in the past to eradicate your racial identities and cultures. You have survived against the odds and we are in awe of your resilience and strength in doing so. We respect the wisdom of your Elders and the courage of your warriors, both past and present, who have fought, and continue to fight, for the preservation of your cultures and the safety and well-being of your children. We value the history and richness of your cultures and the enduring contributions of your peoples to the fabric of our society, particularly during times of war and hardship when the generosity of your spirit shone.

In being predominantly non-Indigenous organisations, we do not presume to speak on your behalf in relation to your cultural beliefs or aspirations for the future. Nor do we pretend to fully comprehend the pain you have experienced or understand the best paths for you to take in your healing and recovery. That is for you to determine.

Nevertheless, as leaders of Queensland society, we do claim the right and moral responsibility to speak out about the kinds of values, attitudes and behaviours that non-Indigenous Queenslanders should demonstrate in their relationships with you and to denounce racism in all its forms. The commitment we are making today is to stand by you as you continue your journey towards healing and recovery and to listen to you more closely when you yarn with us about what you need to assist you in this quest.

On this very important day, we mourn for the losses of the Stolen Generation, but demand a better future – for you, for us and for our children.



Combined Voices is an initiative of Queensland peak bodies and supporters that was commenced in 2009 to draw attention to the ongoing disadvantage being experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in relation to their health, education and safety. For more information about the Combined Voices Campaign, visit our website at www.combinedvoices.org.au.

Our thanks are extended to the National Sorry Day Committee and National Healing Foundation's Stolen Generations Reference Group for their advice and counsel.