

Why Audrey says we need to say sorry

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By Josephine Banens

For Audrey Kinnear, "sorry" is a word which should have come a long time ago. Originally from the Maralinga lands, in the western region of South Australia, Audrey was taken from her family when she was four.

"My brother and I were placed in a mission home on the far west coast of South Australia [Seduna]," Audrey said before her lecture at [the University of Canberra] Sorry Day ceremony on Wednesday, May 26.

One of the stolen generation, Audrey was 28 before she saw her Mother again.

"When you've been taken at the age of four and you turn up at the age of 28, it must be weird," Mrs Kinnear said about her Mothers emotions.

The softly spoken trained nurse now works as a consultant for Kutju Ku-ru (One Vision) Reconciliation and healing Centre and has strong feelings about the policies brought in by the then Government in 1937.

"The whole idea was to wipe out the Aboriginal race. But it didn't work," the grandmother said.

She believes a national "sorry" is significant for the healing of those people similar to her who were taken and for their families.

"It's important to get an apology from the nation because these were Government policies that devastated Aboriginal people's lives. Deliberate Government policies.

**"Had John Howard said sorry in 1998 at the Reconciliation conference in Melbourne, we'd have all got on with our business, and not have to have a national sorry day,"** she said.

"They [The government] seem to be uncomfortable with the truth of history".

[University of Canberra] Ngunnawal Centre Manager, Terry Williams describes her as "a powerful person, but also very at peace."

**"She's one of those people who has been out there at the coalface. Someone who relates with anybody but also has incredible influence and power".**

He said Audrey's triumph over her circumstances has made her a person who should be recognised for her achievements and difficult lifetime.

Audrey has been involved with the Ngunnawal Centre since her move to Canberra in 1992.

She said the recent Government decision to abolish Australia's peak indigenous organisation, ATSIC was a major concern for all Australians.

"I was really angry and upset,"

"It's going mainstream again. They mainstreamed us when they brought in the policies of removing children and assimilating us, and look at the damage that was done. Now they're going to mainstream us again by providing ATSIC services in mainstream organisations," she said.

**"I'm personally concerned for the future of Indigenous people in this country".**

But all hope is not lost for the Indigenous and Torres Strait people of Canberra, who may have their own avenue for elected representation. The ACT Chief Minister, Jon Stanhope, told the *National Indigenous Times* on May 26 he would consider introducing an indigenous elected body in the ACT.

Audrey says more Australians should recognise and understand **"the darkest chapter of Australian history"**.

"My wish is that non-Indigenous people can learn more about our past and do whatever they can to help the healing."

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