OUR NATION’S PAIN

March 27th, 2013

The Commonwealth’s apology to people affected by Australia’s forced adoption practices has been supported by the Northern Territory Parliament.

Chief Minister Adam Giles said the “secrecy and coercion” that accompanied the practice of forced adoption was wrong and will never be allowed to occur again.

“These practices have left a legacy of grief, trauma, loss, disconnection and unwarranted shame, guilt and secrecy on the people they affected,” Mr Giles said.

“The past practices of forced removal and adoption have caused great pain and suffering to mothers, fathers and babies who were adopted and to the family members they were separated from.

"Mothers who experienced forced adoption practices were not properly informed of their rights, nor provided with the support that mothers need. Fathers were excluded from the decision making process.

“These practices did not continue in the Territory after Self Government in 1978.”

Mr Giles said that in the years following Self Government, institutions such as Retta Dixon Children’s Home and Dundas House were closed and the Government imposed a moratorium on adoption while policy was revised and the law amended.

“The Territory Government is committed to making available appropriate counselling support to anyone facing a pregnancy in challenging circumstances or who may be experiencing parenting difficulties,” he said.

“The Government also supports National initiatives such as the Find and Connect program which assists people affected by forced adoptions and the Adoption of Children Act entitles parties to adoption to obtain identifying information about their family origins.

“The Northern Territory Parliament today formally expressed its sorrow and regret for the pain caused by past forced adoption practices and acknowledged its support for the apology made last week by the Federal Parliament on behalf of the nation.

“We offer our heartfelt sympathy to all those Territory families, past and present, who were separated by forced adoption.

“This directly affects people such as Territory woman Nikki Caulfield, taken from her mother in New South Wales in 1976, who has campaigned so proudly for the rights of those affected by forced adoptions."

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