

## **Grandmothers demand DOCS return stolen children on anniversary of apology**

Grandmothers and families from Gunnedah will rally outside NSW Parliament House today at 12.30pm to demand an end to what they say is a [new Stolen Generation](#) of Aboriginal children.

Initiated by the newly formed group in Gunnedah, Grand-Mothers Against Removals (GMAR), the rally will hear eyewitness accounts from families who have had children recently removed by the NSW Department of Community Services (DOCS).

The Grandmothers say that the punitive approach of removal must be replaced with investment in support services and community development to ensure families can stay together.

***“Removal harms our children. The psychological, emotional and social problems they are going to have are severe. This needs to stop! We want our kids to come home!”***, said Aunty Hazel, a founding member of GMAR and grandmother to over 30 children.

NSW has the highest rates of Aboriginal child removal in the country with more than eight per cent of Aboriginal children in the state currently in out-of-home care.

Aunty Hazel continued, ***“This literally affects everyone. The current removals of Aboriginal children from their families are reminiscent of the protectionist and assimilationist practices of the past. Sorry doesn’t mean much to us when our children are still being ripped out of our hands by welfare workers and police”***.

Whilst Aboriginal children make up 4.2% of the population, they comprise over 30% of children in care. [The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care](#) reported last year that Aboriginal children are ten times more likely than non-Aboriginal children to be removed from their families.

Aunty Hazel described, ***“What DOCS is doing is criminal! They turn up to the house under false pretences. All of a sudden there are multiple police officers. DOCS take the child and put them in the car. If the parent and family try to prevent that from happening they are charged and arrested. There is no regard for what the parent or child is going through. DOCS come with one thing in mind and that’s removal”***.

February 13 will mark the six year anniversary of Kevin Rudd’s National Apology in which he pledged “the injustices of the past must never, never happen again” but since the *Bringing Them Home* Report in 1997 there has been a five-fold increase in the national number of Aboriginal children removed from their families. At June 2013, there were almost 14 000 Aboriginal children in out-of-home care.

GMAR says that this rally is just the beginning of an ongoing protest movement calling for the return of Aboriginal children to their families. The rally has been offered support by the Stop the Intervention Collective Sydney and the Indigenous Social Justice Association

Aunty Hazel added, ***“They’re not only creating a stolen generation but they are creating a stolen heritage. They are denying Aboriginal culture and history to these children. Everything about their Being is under threat because of DOCS and it is guised as protection”***.

***“We have a right to parent and grandparent our children and educate them on their history. This is one little town in the outback that is no longer going to be forgotten. If it takes this one town to stand up and say we have had enough, other towns will start to stand up too. We will be a voice they can’t ignore. Government’s need to be made accountable for what is happening”***, Aunty Hazel concluded.

Please find event details including speakers attached.

**FOR MEDIA COMMENT:**

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**FOR COMMENT ON POLICY AND STATISTICS ANALYSIS:**

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