



We're for Childhood
SINCE 1877

Berry Street Apology to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities

On behalf of Berry Street, and our preceding agencies, we acknowledge and deeply regret the pain, loss, suffering, indignity, dispossession and degradation that European invasion inflicted on the traditional owners of the land, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We acknowledge the violence inflicted upon Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people including the massacres that occurred across the country as part of the process of colonisation.

We know that from the earliest days of colonisation the forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families was pursued in order to facilitate the decline of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. We acknowledge that past child welfare policies and practices discriminated against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and authorised the removal of their children and placement in institutions and with non-Indigenous foster families. We acknowledge and agree with the evidence contained in the *Bringing Them Home Report*¹ that this was a form of cultural genocide².

We apologise for any part we had in these policies and practices and for taking too long to oppose them. We regret the disconnection from culture and disruption of family and kinship systems that occurred during this period. We acknowledge the impact this continues to have on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families across generations.

We are sorry that we failed to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to enjoy the same rights and freedoms that other families enjoyed. The rights and freedom to raise their own children within their own culture and have their cultural identity respected.

We acknowledge, celebrate and applaud the resistance and advocacy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that brought an end to these policies and secured a future for their children.

Berry Street has learnt that connection to family, culture and country is fundamental for children's identity, sense of self and belonging within their community and to their wellbeing. We recognise self-determination as the fundamental principle that must underpin our approach to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

We are committed to delivering culturally safe and respectful services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. We are committed to the empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, to reconciliation and to justice and equity for all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Wappett".

Paul Wappett
President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sandie de Wolf".

Sandie de Wolf AM
Chief Executive Officer

1. See Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC). *Bringing Them Home – Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their Families*. Commonwealth of Australia 1997. Available www.humanrights.gov.au

2. Note: The UN Convention on Genocide agreed in 1948 defined genocide as the intent to destroy in whole or part a national, racial, ethnic or other group including by transferring the children of the group to another group.