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The Gippsland Anglican

Volume 78, No. 2 March 2008

Published in Gippsland since 1930

Australia says Sorry

Apology to the Stolen Generations

ON WEDNESDAY, February 13, Australia's Commonwealth Parliament officially apologised to this country's Indigenous people for harm caused as a result of policies and actions identified from investigations and hearings during the Bringing Them Home Enquiry, which identified the Stolen Generations.

More than 100 members of the Stolen Generation were specifically invited to attend Parliament as special guests of the government, including first generation survivors and family representatives of those of the Stolen Generations who have since died. More people attended with the support of business and individual donations through Reconciliation Australia.

Eight commissioners from the Bringing Them Home Enquiry, including Mr Mick Dodson and Ms Marcia Langton, along with Lady Wilson, the widow of the commission's chairman, Sir Ronald Wilson, were also invited to attend Parliament. Ms Faith Bander and Ms Evelyn Scott, who campaigned for voting rights for Indigenous Australians in the 1967 referendum were also invited to Canberra.

This is the wording, as tabled by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, of Federal Parliament's full apology to the Stolen Generations:

"Today we honour the Indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history.

We reflect on their past mistreatment.

We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were Stolen Generations – this blemished chapter in our nation's history.

The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia's history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.

We apologise for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these, our fellow Australians.

We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country.

For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry.

To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry.

And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry.

We, the Parliament of Australia, respectfully request that this apology be received in the spirit in which it is offered as part of the healing of the nation.

For the future we take heart; resolving that this new page in the history of our great continent can now be written. We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians.

A future where this Parliament resolves that the injustices of the past must never, never happen again.

A future where we harness the determination of all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to close the gap that lies between us in life expectancy, educational achievement and economic opportunity.

A future where we embrace the possibility of new solutions to enduring problems where old approaches have failed.

A future based on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility.

A future where all Australians, whatever their origins, are truly equal partners, with equal opportunities and with an equal stake in shaping the next chapter in the history of this great country, Australia."

Following the apology, the Bishop of Gippsland, Rt Rev. John McIntyre, was one among a number of leading Anglicans who welcomed the words but emphasised "we are now confronted with our responsibility to address the injustices caused by [past] wrongdoing".



AN HISTORIC event took place on Sunday, February 10, at Morwell, when Kathy Dalton, well known in both Aboriginal and non-Indigenous circles in West Gippsland, was commissioned an Aboriginal Pastor for the Anglican Diocese of Gippsland. The service was performed by the Bishop of Gippsland, Rt Rev. John McIntyre.

It is believed Kathy's appointment is the first commissioning of an Aboriginal person for ministry in the Diocese, since Bishop Arthur Malcolm was commissioned for ministry at Lake Tyers. About 60 people joined in a celebratory Eucharist, including the children of the Koorie Sunday School singing 'Jesus loves the little children' in English and in traditional language.

During the service, Kathy was presented to Bishop John by two elders, Auntie Sarah Morgan and Auntie Norah (Nookie) Hayes and two members of her family, her cousin, Ronald Edwards and her brother, William Dalton, who spoke of their pride in her and in

her achievements.

Kathy has been running a Koorie Sunday School at Morwell since last year and has been reaching out into her community, supporting the spiritual and Christian needs of Indigenous and other people on behalf of the Diocese.

Bishop John McIntyre described Kathy's commissioning as Aboriginal Pastor as a moment of historical significance for the Diocese.

"It is many years since we have had an Aboriginal person working in a stipendiary position in the Diocese. In employing Kathy, we acknowledge and affirm not just her call to ministry and her gifts and talents for the task but also the unique contribution that Aboriginal people have to offer to the ministry of our church in the communities in which we serve.

"Make no mistake: there is a prophetic edge to what we do in commissioning Kathy. We are saying, that as our church honours and affirms ministry by, with and for the original inhabitants of this land so we will more and more become the church that God wants

us to be in Australia. Be ready for the changes this will mean for us all and look forward in hope to the opportunities for the Gospel that will arise as we walk forward together in the service of Jesus Christ," Bishop John said.

ABOVE: After her commissioning as Aboriginal Pastor for the Anglican Diocese of Gippsland, Kathy Dalton (*centre front*) is pictured with (*left to right*) Auntie Elizabeth Edwards, Bishop John McIntyre, Auntie Norah Hayes and Auntie Sarah Morgan.

Photo: Heather Marten
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Correction

IN THE last issue of *The Gippsland Anglican*, on page one it was incorrectly stated the partnership between the Rwandan Diocese of Gahini and Gippsland Diocese, was 10 years old. This was incorrect. At the time of writing, it was 10 years since Gahini was inaugurated as a Diocese (in 1997).