Australia's Stolen Generations

When?
1890s – 1970s
Aboriginal children were stolen from their families, creating the “Stolen Generations”

Who?
Mixed descent children
Mainly children of mixed descent, i.e. where one parent was Aboriginal, were taken

How many?
Tens of thousands
Australia-wide tens of thousands of children. Government estimates 10% of Aboriginal people aged over 25.

What happened to them?
Used as cheap labour
Raised on missions or by foster parents, without education, girls were trained to be domestic servants, the boys to be stockmen. Many were physically, emotionally and sexually abused.

1 in 6
Girls ran away.

1 in 11
Girls became pregnant while apprenticed.

1 in 12
Girls died.

Government spendings
$80 million was spent on the surveillance of families and the removal of children compared with just $500,000 on supporting the same impoverished families.

Even more are taken away today

1997 2008 2012 2014
The number of Aboriginal children living in out of home care is rising constantly. In 2008 it was 4 times the number of 1969.

8% of Aboriginal people aged 15 years and over were removed from their natural families in 2008.

Institutions (selection)
1887 – 1986 Parramatta Girls’ Home
1908 – 1981 Bomaderry Children’s Home
1911 – 1969 Cootamundra Girls’ Home
1920s – 1970 Kinchela Aboriginal Boys’ Home

What were the effects?
Loss of identity
Mistrusting everyone
Internal guilt
 Substance and alcohol abuse
Depression and other mental illnesses

Difficulties parenting
Intergenerational trauma
Violence
Loss of cultural affiliation
Loss of language

Stayed connected
In Victoria, only about 60% of Koorie children in care remained connected to their family and culture

60%

Lost all contact
One-third of the Aboriginal children removed in non-Aboriginal homes have told the government they had lost all contact with family.

33%

May 26 1997
Sorry Day
Publication of the Bringing Them Home Report. The inquiry made 54 recommendations. 26 May 1998 is the inaugural Sorry Day to commemorate the history of forcible removals and its effects.

Feb 13 2008
Apology
Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, on behalf of the Australian government, apologises to the Stolen Generations

Healing
The hibiscus flower is a symbol for the Stolen Generations. It was chosen because its lilac colour denotates spiritual healing and compassion, and for the fact that it is widespread, grove everywhere and is a survivor.