



Speech by

Dr DAVID WATSON

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

Hansard 26 May 1999

STOLEN GENERATION

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (12.40 p.m.): I think it is appropriate to begin by paying my respects to the traditional owners of the land on which our Parliament House is situated—the Jagera people. However, I do not think it is appropriate to support the motion of the Government. In fact, I find it ironic that on the one day of the year when Queenslanders come together and put all their differences aside to support the maroons, the Premier is promoting division.

While any person with any empathy could not fail to be moved by the stories of the stolen generation as told in the report *Bringing Them Home*, I will not be so presumptuous as to support a blanket apology on behalf of all Queenslanders because, instead of looking back, we must look forward. We cannot change the sad past of indigenous Australians, but we can change their future. Or, more to the point, we can help them take on the responsibility of changing their future for themselves.

Several weeks ago, Aboriginal lawyer and north Queenslander Noel Pearson made some brave statements about what needs to be done to make the future better for indigenous Australians. In a 42-page draft discussion paper titled *Our Right to Take Responsibility*, Noel Pearson told it like it really is. Rather than look back and partake in political stunts such as apologising for the past, I think it would be a far more productive use of Parliament's time if I repeated some of the things Mr Pearson had to say in a very well-constructed paper. He said that welfare was "a poison" which had turned many Aboriginal people into "drunken parasites" and was destroying family and community life.

Mr Nelson interjected.

Dr WATSON: These are Mr Pearson's words. He also challenged Aboriginal leaders to cease disempowering their own people through continually depicting them as "victims". The main point Mr Pearson made in his paper was that Aboriginal people need to accept that along with rights come responsibilities—responsibilities to themselves, their wives, husbands, children, elders and the general community. He stated—

"The whole Aboriginal policy debate has been about rights—human rights, legal rights, land rights, individual rights against government and so on—but there has been no discussion about responsibilities."

In his paper, he states—

"In order to leech the poison out of welfare we have to build responsibility, reciprocity and 'mutual obligation' into all of the economic relationships and transactions in our society."

In a report on the discussion paper in the *Courier-Mail* of 30 April, Tony Koch quotes Mr Pearson as saying—

"Since the 1967 referendum, Aboriginal people have believed their right earned was the right to drink. What about the responsibility to your children?"

Mr Pearson went on to say—

"The Government is paying these people to sit around the canteen to drink and destroy the prospects of their children. The madness of that system has to stop."

In his paper, Noel Pearson also stated that the most powerful resource an individual can have is education. Education is the resource which can most mobilise and empower individuals and society.

I call on all members of this House to support people such as Noel Pearson who have the courage to tell it like it is. I call on all members of this House to support him and others like him in their quest to deliver their people from the poison of welfare.

In conclusion Mr Speaker, I do not support saying sorry because saying sorry only reinforces the victim mentality and does nothing to empower Aboriginal people to take responsibility for their own future.
