



Australian  
Human Rights  
Commission

everyone, everywhere, everyday



Human rights  
education resources  
for teachers



Photo: Heide Smith

*Bringing them home*

# Bringing them home



**Human rights  
education resources  
for teachers**

- Subjects:** Society and Environment, English, Arts/Drama, Australian Studies, Aboriginal Studies, Civics and Citizenship, Geography, History
- Level:** Some activities suitable for Year 5 and up (most activities suitable for Year 9 and up)
- Time needed:** 1–10 lessons (can be used as a complete unit of study or separately as required – refer to individual activities)

## Introduction

In 1997, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (now the Australian Human Rights Commission) released its report *Bringing them home: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*. Following this, the Commission received extensive requests from teachers for information about the report.

The resources on this site have been developed in response to this request. There are a variety of worksheets that can be used in either the classroom or in the community.

*Warning: These materials may contain images of deceased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons.*

## Aim

The teaching activities are intended to help students gain a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the issues surrounding the forcible removal of Indigenous people in Australian history. The aim of each activity is detailed in the teaching and learning strategies.

Activities can be photocopied for class use and used individually or as an entire resource.

## Learning outcomes

Students will develop:

- an understanding of the history of the forcible separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, and associated historical and social justice issues
- literacy skills, including critical literacy and comprehension skills, through reading and responding to a variety of texts, both orally and through writing
- research and fact-sourcing skills (particularly in the area of history and social studies), and an ability to think creatively and to communicate information to people
- decision making skills, within an individual, group and class context
- skills in describing, reflecting, interpreting, analysing, evaluating and higher order thinking
- an understanding of the value of personal, oral and local histories and their importance to social/community history
- an understanding of issues relating to Indigenous social justice
- an understanding of the value of community action and ways of responding to social justice/human rights issues at a local level.

## Activities/resources

*Activities that explain the issue of forced removal of children:*

- 1. About the Inquiry**
  - Resource sheet
  - Information log activity sheet
- 2. Personal stories**
  - Resource sheet
  - Comparison activity sheet
- 3. Bringing them home DVD**
  - DVD activity sheet (note that DVD needs to be ordered separately from the Commission's Publications area or online at: [www.humanrights.gov.au/about/publications](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/about/publications))
  - DVD activity suggested answers
- 4. The effects across generations**
  - Resource sheet
  - Three level guide
  - Three level guide suggested answers

*Activities that explore elements of Australian Indigenous history:*

- 5. Track the History**
  - Timeline (note that a timeline poster can be ordered separately from the Commission's Publications area or online at: [www.humanrights.gov.au/education/bth/download/Track\\_History\\_A1poster.pdf](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/education/bth/download/Track_History_A1poster.pdf))
  - Timeline activity sheet
  - Timeline activity suggested answers
  - Research activity sheet
- 6. Australia – a national overview**
  - Resource sheet
  - Note-taking activity sheet
- 7. Using sources**
  - Quotes resource sheet
  - Statistics activity sheet
  - Media release resource sheet
  - Local history project activity sheet
- 8. History and laws**
  - The History: New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory
  - The History: Northern Territory
  - The History: Queensland
  - The History: South Australia
  - The History: Tasmania
  - The History: Victoria
  - The History: Western Australia

- The Laws: New South Wales
- The Laws: Australian Capital Territory
- The Laws: Northern Territory
- The Laws: Queensland
- The Laws: South Australia
- The Laws: Tasmania
- The Laws: Victoria
- The Laws: Western Australia
- State and territories laws and history key questions and answer sheets
- Comparison chart activity sheet

*Activities to help students develop civic responsibility:*

### **9. Responses to the Inquiry**

- *Responses from governments, churches and community* available at: [http://www.humanrights.gov.au/social\\_justice/bth\\_report/index.html](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/social_justice/bth_report/index.html)
- *Responses to the Inquiry* activity sheet
- *Australian Government responses to the Bringing them home Report Speech*

### **10. Global comparison**

- *Australia: A national overview* resource sheet
- *Canada* resource sheet
- *New Zealand* resource sheet
- *South Africa* resource sheet
- *Global comparison* activity sheet
- *Global comparison* suggested answers sheet

*English resources/activities*

### **11. Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence by Doris Pilkington**

- Pre-reading activity sheet
- Common experiences activity sheet
- Exploring the stories activity sheet
- Key questions activity sheet

### **12. Is that you Ruthie? A play by Ruth Hegarty**

- Predictions, readings, discussions activity sheet
- Exploring the setting timeline activity sheet
- What did Ruthie experience? Comparison activity sheet
- Points of view – creative writing activity sheet

### **13. Stolen: A play by Jane Harrison**

- Making the connections activity sheet
- Character profiles activity sheet
- Scene analysis (Group 1) activity sheet
- Scene analysis (Group 2) activity sheet
- Scene analysis (Group 3) activity sheet

- Scene analysis (Group 4) activity sheet
- Scene analysis (Group 5) activity sheet
- Key questions activity sheet

*Extensive background material is available from the Commission website to support and complement the activities above.*

- *Bringing them home* the report of the *National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*
- Glossary
- Community Guide
- *Track the history* poster
- *Us Taken-Away Kids* magazine
- Recent speeches
- *Bringing them home* DVD

## Teaching strategies

**Note:** It is highly recommended that teachers consider the sensitivities around teaching controversial issues prior to distributing materials. Discussion around topics such as forced removals continues to generate a high level of emotion in many communities.

These activities provide a general introduction to the laws, policies and practices in place in Australia that authorised Indigenous children to be separated from their families. The personal testimonies of the people who gave evidence to the Inquiry are placed in the broader social context.

### 1. About the Inquiry

#### Aim

To introduce students to issues raised in the *Bringing them home* report, and to identify any prior knowledge they have in relation to the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families.

#### Resources

- *About the Inquiry* resource sheet
- Information log activity
- *Bringing them home* glossary
- *Bringing them home* report
- *Us Taken-Away Kids* magazine

1. Provide students with the *Information log* activity. Students begin by brainstorming and listing in the 'before' section, everything they know about the National Inquiry and the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. This step can be done individually, with partners, in small groups or the whole class can participate together. Students should be encouraged to share and debate this information as a group before moving to the next step.  
\*\* Teachers may wish to provide students with a copy of the glossary at this point.
2. Provide students with the *About the Inquiry* resource sheet. While they are reading, ask students to write brief notes on the new information they find in the 'key points' column of their information log. This can be done individually, with partners, or in small groups, depending on classroom dynamics and objectives.
3. Using their summaries, students are then asked to write three questions, either to quiz other readers or to use for later study.

The completed worksheet can be submitted as an assignment in itself or kept in student notebooks as a study aid.

### 2. Personal stories

#### Aim

To introduce students to the history of separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families through storytelling. One key theme here is the function of oral history and how personal histories can inform social histories.

The comparison activity uses storytelling to help students develop an understanding of the differences and similarities of the experiences of Indigenous children who were separated from their families.

## Resources

- *Us Taken-Away Kids* – experiences and artwork from the Indigenous Community available at [www.humanrights.gov.au/about/publications/index.html](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/about/publications/index.html)
- *Personal stories* resource sheet
- *Personal stories* comparison activity
- Also required: butchers paper or cardboard for group activity

## Part A: Comparisons Chart

1. Students read two (or more) of the personal stories from the resource sheet. The personal stories included in the activity are sourced from evidence submitted to the *National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*. Further stories have been collated in the magazine *Us Taken-Away Kids* available online at [www.humanrights.gov.au/bth/taken/index.html](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/bth/taken/index.html) or by ordering the publications at: [www.humanrights.gov.au/about/publications/index.html](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/about/publications/index.html)
2. After reading the personal stories, students work through the *Personal stories* comparison activity.

## Part B: Group discussion

After completing the comparison chart, students form groups (of four/five) to discuss the stories they have read as part of the comparison exercise.

1. Provide students with a sheet of cardboard or butchers paper to work on. Ask them to divide this sheet into four sections with the following headings: *similarities*, *differences*, *common experiences*, and *long-term effects*.
2. After completing the four sections – *similarities*, *differences*, *common experiences*, and *long-term effects*, ask students to identify one key point from each of the four sections. These main points will be used to guide the classroom discussion to follow.

## Part C: Reflection

It is useful here to consolidate what the students have learned from the stories through classroom discussion. Questions are included on the activity sheet to help discussion.

## 3. *Bringing them home* DVD

### Aim

To introduce students to the history of separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families through storytelling.

The DVD is an excellent tool for linking the personal stories and experiences of Indigenous people with the broader Australian history. In particular, it's a good starting point for students to think about 'assimilation', a keyword in Australian history.

*Note that the DVD needs to be ordered separately from the Commission.*

The DVD contains:

- personal experiences from several Indigenous people who were removed as children
- images of missions, the reserves and institutions that Indigenous people were removed to after being removed from their families
- newsreels from the period

- explanations and comments by Mick Dodson (former Aboriginal Social Justice Commissioner) and Sir Ronald Wilson (former President of the Commission) who were Hearing Commissioners for the *National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*
- songs from artists such as Archie Roach.

### Resources

- *Bringing them home* DVD activity sheet
- *Bringing them home* DVD activity suggested answers
- *Bringing them home* DVD – available by ordering through publications at: [www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/)

### Part A – Watching the DVD

Provide students with the *Bringing them home* DVD activity sheet to assist them to make notes while they watch the DVD. The DVD runs for 32 minutes. It is recommended that the DVD be stopped mid-way for discussion.

### Part B – Group discussion

Bring students together to form mixed ability groups for a discussion focused on the newsreels which appear in the *Bringing them home* DVD. Questions for discussion are included in the worksheet.

Assign each group with one of the questions in the worksheet and ask them to report back to the class on their conclusions.

### Part C – Personal perspectives

Students should consolidate their impressions from the group discussions (and DVD notes) before writing a personal statement of their own, expressing individual perspectives on the issues presented in the *Bringing them home* DVD.

## 4. The effects across generations

### Aim

This activity is designed to support students' understanding of the impact of the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families on individuals, families and communities. The three level guide comprehension activity is used here to support students during their reading of *The effects across generations* resource sheet by providing a clear purpose and direction for their reading.

*The effects across generations* resource sheet is an exposition of some of the main points that came out of the *National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*.

The three levels of statements – literal, interpretive and applied, guide the reader to focus on the relevant information and to develop an informed opinion on the issues explored in the text. The reader is encouraged to draw on their background knowledge of the issue and to apply the information from the text to personal contexts.

### Resources

- *The effects across generations* resource sheet
- *The effects across generations* three level guide
- *The effects across generations* suggested answers

### Part A – Using a three level guide

1. Students complete *The effects across generations* three level guide. Teachers should emphasise the importance of being able to justify the responses made to each of the statements.
2. When students have completed their responses, they should discuss their responses to the statements in groups. Encourage each group to come to an agreement based on references to the text – not a compromise, but a consensus.

### Part B – Class discussion

A structured class discussion completes the activity. This aims to develop an understanding of ‘community’ in Indigenous societies and how the policies of assimilation and protectionism affected ‘ways of being’ for individuals and their families. The discussion should also stress the importance of reconciliation as an ongoing process for all Australians, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous – not just for the people who were separated from their families.

## 5. Track the History

### Aim

To provide students with knowledge and understanding of the laws, policies and practices that form part of the history of the separation of Indigenous children from their families in Australia.

Students will develop an understanding of general concepts such as ‘assimilation’ and ‘self-determination’, and how these policies are manifested in terms of practices such as:

- the Aboriginal Protection Boards
- legal guardianship of Indigenous children under the Chief Protectors
- early separations of Indigenous children in the 1800s
- the role of missions and institutions, and the conditions in them
- the importance of Indigenous management of Indigenous child welfare.

The *Track the History* timeline is available in three formats: a poster version, online and text-only. The poster version can be ordered from the Commission at:

<http://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/index.html#order>

### Resources

- *Track the History* timeline (online/ hard copy timeline)
- *Track the History* timeline activity
- *Track the History* timeline suggested answers
- *Track the History* research activity
- *Bringing them home* glossary
- *Bringing them home* bibliography

### Part A – identifying time, people and places

Using the *Track the History* timeline and timeline activity, students should work on the first section individually. In each of the tables, students are asked to identify information from the timeline and interpret it in their own words.

### Part B – group discussion: time, people and places

After analysing the timeline individually, students work in mixed ability groups, to discuss how the concepts of time, people and place help us to understand history. Refer to worksheet discussion points.

### Part C – personal perspective

When the discussion is complete students reflect on the opinions they have heard from their classmates and write a paragraph that identifies the points of discussion they viewed as most important.

The information extracted from the *Track the History* timeline in this activity can be used as a starting point for the following research activity.

### Part D – research

The *Track the History* research activity provides a step-by-step guide on undertaking a research project. In most cases, the events in the timeline include a link to another site for further information. This is the best starting point. Where Internet access is an issue, students can rely on reference books as a starting point.

During the research process, students should have access to the *Bringing them home* glossary, and the *Bringing them home* bibliography as additional resources.

**Note: Teachers may wish to exclude certain areas of research depending on time and resources available and other issues of discretion.**

During the activity students are asked to:

- identify an area of interest for research and define the topic
- undertake research using a range of resources including websites, books, approaching appropriate organisations and discussing with others
- make useful notes on the information they have discovered during their research
- organise and summarise information discovered during research into a useful and logical structure
- write a description of what happened over a particular period of time, who was involved, why it happened and whether there are any differences of opinion
- explain how they think it is connected to the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families.

In the final stage of this activity, students are asked to present their research. The activity provides scope for the research to be presented in a variety of ways: written, visual display, oral presentation or news reportage. Encourage students to consider different ways of conveying information and ‘telling’.

Teachers should provide some guidance to students when choosing how they will present their research. Dependent upon time and resources, encourage students to respond to the events identified and issues raised in the *Track the History* timeline creatively. Activities could include:

- writing poetry or short stories about events or issue represented in the timeline
- representing a particular event or issue visual in a painting, drawing, mural, print, or photograph
- writing and performing a play or song about a particular event or issue represented in the timeline.

## 6. Australia – a national overview

### Aim

This is a reading activity aimed at assisting students in gaining a broader understanding of the background history and social context of the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families.

### Resources

- *Australia: a national overview* resource sheet
- *Australia: a national overview* note-taking activity

### Part A: Note-taking activity

Students read the *Australia: a national overview* resource sheet. During their reading, they use the note-taking activity, identifying three dot points under each of the headings. This activity will assist students to identify important points in the history of the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families.

### Part B: Paired review

After reading the resource sheet, students articulate and process their understanding of what they have read and think critically about the validity of the text using the paired review strategy.

#### Paired reviews:

- enhance clarifying and paraphrasing skills
- develop listening skills
- give students time to process what they are learning
- help students remember new information
- encourage reflection on own learning
- encourage students to verbalise their understandings about text
- allow students to respond to texts through feelings and idea.

The Paired Reading Strategy is sourced from: Buehl, D. (2001). *Classroom Strategies for Interactive Learning*. Delaware, USA: International Reading Association.

### Procedure for paired reviews

This strategy provides students with practice in summarising what has been read and learned. Students work with a partner, taking turns in being the 'talker' and the 'listener', reviewing a text that has been read.

1. Pair students as partner A and partner B.
2. Partner A begins by recounting something interesting from the text and talks for 60 seconds, while partner B listens.
3. After 60 seconds tell them to 'switch' and change roles. Partner B cannot repeat anything said by A.
4. When partner B has spoken for 60 seconds, partners switch again. Now partner A has 40 seconds to continue the review. Stipulate that nothing stated already can be repeated.
5. After 40 seconds announce 'switch' where partner B gets 40 seconds.
6. Follow the same procedure allowing each partner 20 seconds to recap.

This strategy is a quick way for students to summarise their understandings about a text. The no-repeat rule forces partners to really listen and think carefully about what they can say. Time periods can be adjusted to fit the needs of the students.

When the activity is completed any questions can be addressed in a class discussion. Teachers should ensure that students have developed an understanding of the general concepts, including assimilation and self-determination, and how these policies were manifested in terms of practices such as:

- the Aboriginal Protection Boards
- legal guardianship of Indigenous children under the Chief Protectors
- early removal of Indigenous children in the 1800s

- the role of missions and institutions, and the conditions in them
- the importance of Indigenous management of Indigenous child welfare.

## 7. Using sources

### Aim

To help students develop their ability to critically review primary sources of information related to the inquiry.

### Resources

- Quotes activity sheet
- Statistics activity sheet
- Media release activity sheet
- Local history project
- *Additional resources required: access to the internet, school or local library and other resource materials.*

### Part A

Each of the quotes, statistics and media releases activities has questions at the bottom of the page. These can be used as homework, as additional activities for fast finishing students, or as stand-alone class activities.

### Part B

The local history project gives students a chance to do some research and investigate the Indigenous history of their area. The activity places analysis of the effects of separation of Indigenous children from their families in a local context.

**Teachers should investigate the resources available in the local area before assigning this activity to ensure that students are able to complete the research in an effective and culturally sensitive manner.**

#### 1. Getting started

Students are required to select an area of interest and a topic for their research. At this stage, teachers should assist students in clarifying basic information about the Indigenous communities in the local area and fine-tuning their research topic or question.

#### 2. Beginning the research

At this stage, students start to identify resources and information that will be useful for their research. A selection of contact details and references has been included in the Local History Project worksheet as starting points. Teachers should assist students to identify the best approach, taking into consideration the types of resources available in the local area.

#### 3. Organising information

At this stage, students use the table included on the worksheet to organise the information they have discovered. The table contains a series of questions that will help students to categorise their notes and begin to plan the presentation of their research.

#### 4. Presenting your research

At this final stage, students present their research to the class. Teachers may wish to set particular parameters for these presentations, e.g. each student must present an oral presentation to the class or present a written report on their discoveries.

## 8. Laws and policies

### Aim

This activity requires students to take a closer look at the history of the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families – specific to each state or territory. Examining a different scale of history encourages students to learn a range of details about differences within Indigenous history. During this activity, students should access both the *History* and *Laws* resource sheets to gain a deeper understanding of the policies and practices that lead to separations.

### Resources

- The History: all states and territories
- The Laws: all states and territories
- State and territories laws and history key questions and answer sheets
- Comparison chart activity sheet

#### 1. Reading the histories

Students are asked to read both the *History* and *Laws* resource sheets specific to their own state or territory. Dependent upon resources, students may use the *Bringing them home* website to access these resources. Alternatively, they can be distributed as hand-outs.

After reading the *History* and *Laws* resource sheets for the relevant state or territory, students work through a set of key questions. At this stage, students should work individually. The key questions have been designed to assist students to identify information from the text and to consolidate materials from two different sources.

After completing the key questions for their own state, students should choose another state's laws and history to explore. Teachers may choose to form seven groups, assigning one additional state history to each group, or alternatively allow students to choose which other state or territory they would like to learn about. As with their own state, students work through a set of key questions to consolidate the information they have discovered in the *History* and *Laws* resource sheets.

The information gathered here will be used in the comparison activity to follow.

#### 2. Comparing the histories

A comparison between the students' state/territory and another state/territory forms the final part of this activity. Using the *Bringing them home* – state/territories comparison activity sheet, students should work within their groups to identify five similarities and differences between the states/territories they have analysed.

After completing the sheet, teachers should engage students in a class discussion to consolidate this new information. The following focus questions may be useful to start the discussion:

- What differences did you notice between what happened in both states/territories?
- How would you explain how these differences came about? What factors do you think gave rise to these differences?
- What are the common threads?
- What new information have you learned about the removal of Indigenous children from their families?

## 9. Responses to the Inquiry

### Aim

This activity assists students to focus on how governments, churches and communities have responded to the recommendations of the *Bringing them home* report and includes a creative poster activity to help students work towards reconciliation.

## Resources

- *Responses from governments, churches and community* available at: [www.humanrights.gov.au/social\\_justice/bth\\_report/index.html](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/social_justice/bth_report/index.html)
- *Responses to the Inquiry* activity sheet
- *Australian Government Responses to the Bringing them home Report* Speech
- Additional resources: art supplies and/or access to graphic design software/computers for poster design activity sheet

### 1. Group discussion

Students will need to do some reading or research before they list/discuss the events/actions people have undertaken in response to the *Bringing them home* report. A list is included on the activity sheet; however where appropriate teachers may wish to focus on some of events/actions taken at a local level. Local Indigenous organisations may be a useful source of information here. The speech '*Australian Government Responses to the Bringing them home Report*' provided is helpful pre-reading.

Students discuss the community responses and add three other things people in the community could do to help the children who were forcibly removed from their families and communities.

### 2. Class discussion

Discuss some of the things that governments/churches/police have done in response to the report's recommendations. A list is included on the activity sheet.

During the discussion encourage students to:

- identify where the responses came from
- identify who was involved in the programs that have been implemented
- reflect on how effective the responses have been.

Ask students to add six other things that governments/churches/police could do to help achieve reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

### 3. Creating posters

Students work together to identify a message and audience for raising awareness and create a poster/advertisement promoting their campaign.

Students could imagine that they are part of a group that wants to take some action to raise community awareness about some of the recommendations that has not been responded to, for example; paying compensation to those who were forcibly removed from their families.

## 10. Global comparison

### Aim

This activity requires students to be able to make comparisons between the experience of Indigenous peoples in Australia and that of other countries. This comparison will help students understand how the history of exploration and colonisation has affected countries, communities and peoples around the world.

### Resources

- *Australia: A national overview* resource sheet
- *Canada* resource sheet
- *New Zealand* resource sheet
- *South Africa* resource sheet
- *Global comparison* activity sheet
- *Global comparison* activity suggested answers sheet

## 1. Global comparison activity

Recommended pre-reading: *Australia – A national overview* resource.

Students select a country (Canada, South Africa or New Zealand) to compare with Australia. Students read the resource sheet, making notes on the comparison chart as they go. It is suggested that students complete the initial reading individually.

### Comparison Charts

Using a comparison chart, information about a number of categories or topics is organised so that comparisons can be made.

The comparison chart strategy assists students in drawing comparisons between different texts. It also assists them to extract information and to make generalisations.

## 2. Differences and similarities

After completing the comparison chart, students could work in pairs or small groups to compare the differences and similarities they have identified. This could be followed by a class discussion to compare the discoveries students have made.

The following focus questions have been included below to guide the discussion:

- What differences did you notice between what happened in different countries?
- Can you explain how these differences came about? What factors contributed to these differences?
- What are the similarities?
- What new information have you learned about the removal of Indigenous children from their families?
- Discuss some reasons for European nations to set up colonies throughout the world. What were the main reasons for Britain to set up a penal colony in Australia?
- Were the reasons similar or different to those in New Zealand, South Africa or Canada?

## 3. Writing an exposition activity

The exposition activity can be used as a follow up to the comparisons in the chart. Students write an exposition on issues relating to the treatment of Indigenous children in the other countries.

The purpose of an exposition is to develop ideas and supporting details in order to present a logical argument from a particular point of view. This activity will assist students in consolidating the information they have explored in the global perspective resource sheets, as well as developing skills in logical reasoning.

A table to assist students to extract arguments for and against their thesis has been included in the worksheet. Teachers may need to assist students with research and writing of their exposition.

Teachers may wish to expand this lesson by exploring exposition and report writing in more detail.

The exposition writing stage could also be developed into a classroom debate, dependent upon resources and lesson objectives.