

**NATIONAL SORRY DAY
Journey of Healing**

Friday 26th May 2000

**Arthur Byrne Reserve
Fitzgerald Ave., Maroubra Beach**

It is with deepest respect that we acknowledge the original owners where we sing & talk to you today. I would also like to acknowledge all of our Children who never came home and for those who may never make the long journey home to mothers and fathers, siblings, community and country – Most importantly to acknowledge our Old People who suffered terribly over the intervening years.

The Sydney Aboriginal Choir consists of members who had loved family members taken away; were themselves taken away or had siblings, aunts, uncles, grandmothers and our mothers and fathers taken away. Every Aboriginal person in Australia fits into one of the categories mentioned. We are here today to openly remember our People and to make contribution to National Sorry Day. We are peoples with a long history and longer memories. In the privacy of our own lives we never forget what happened. One day a year on the 26th May we make a Public Statement of our suffering. It was only fitting that this should be our first public performance, with more to come in the future. Our didgeridoo player is Mark Saunders, Susie Williams; our brilliant pianist and our Music ChoirMaster is the composer of this lovely Aboriginal Spiritual. The Stiff Gins have contributed their wonderful voices as members of our Community. The beautiful young lady

who so epitomises our young people with the strength to perform at such a young age is Taminya Fisher.

National Sorry Day, 26 May is recognised for the tabling in federal parliament in 1997 of the *Bringing Them Home Report*. On this day we must particularly remember the hundreds of Aboriginal people who came forward to tell their life stories to the Human Rights Commissioners for the National Inquiry. Some of these people had not even talked to their own families about what happened to them after they were taken, but came forward to speak to the Commissioners in the hope that finally Australia would listen, learn and acknowledge their pain. How are they coping when their stories are trivialised beyond belief by some politicians and certain so-called media journalists. A National Apology by the Australian government is required if black & white are to move forward together.

May I remind us of numerous world leaders who expressed sorrow on behalf of their countries' violation of human rights, and just to mention few examples.

- President Clinton's apology on behalf of his nation for the internment of Japanese-Americans to the Nevada desert during the Second World War;
 - The public apology by President Clinton to the three surviving members of the 300 Afro-American males who suffered from the horrific Eugenic Experiments of the 1940's; and the
 - Japanese Government's Apology to the so-called "Comfort Women" during the Second World War.
- Those making these unqualified apologies, by their very ages would not have had any personal involvement in these atrocities yet they rose in stature and assumed

the role of a statesman and national spokesperson to express sorry for their nations' corporate responsibility for their countries inexcusable actions.

The Australian nation will never move on unless an official Apology is forthcoming.