

Tuesday, 18 March 2014

957. Hon Robin Chappie to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

In relation to the WA Stolen Wages Reparation Scheme and a complaint about the scheme by Ms Ruby Ungia of Ringer's Soak Community, I ask:

(a) will the Minister establish a stolen wages scheme in respect of Ms Ungia and other former Aboriginal cattle station workers who remain unpaid for the work they did to this very day:

(i) if yes to (a), when will this occur and what form will it take;

(ii) if yes to (a), will the Minister work with Aboriginal people and their agencies to develop a fair scheme; and

(iii) if no to (a), why not;

(b) will the Minister apologise to Ms Ungia and other Aboriginal people for the harsh conditions they were forced to endure as a result of Government policies while working on cattle stations in Western Australia:

(i) if no to (b), why not; and

(ii) if yes to (b), when will this occur; and

(c) in view of the advanced age of Ms Ungia and other complainants to the Stolen Wages scheme, and to show good faith with these senior Australians, will the Minister address this as a matter of urgency:

(i) if no to (c), why not; and

(ii) if yes to (c), when might Ms Ungia expect correspondence about the matter from the Minister?

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(a) No.

(i) – (ii) Not applicable.

(iii) The State Government's response to the issue of stolen wages was largely based on advice from the Stolen Wages Taskforce Report, which found that station workers' incomes were not controlled directly by Government and consequently, fall outside the scope of the Stolen Wages Reparation Scheme.

(b) No.

(i) The State Government's response to the issue of stolen wages was largely based on advice from the Stolen Wages Taskforce Report, which found that Government controls over Aboriginal people's money during the period 1905 to 1972 were at their most extensive for those living at Government Settlements including Carrolup, Moore River and other institutions across the State. After careful consideration, a decision was made to limit ex gratia payments through the Stolen Wages Reparation Scheme (the Scheme) to former residents of Native Welfare institutions where the State Government had direct control over people's money and conditions.

It should be noted that the State Government invests heavily in measures to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people. These investments are, to a large degree, based on recognition that the disadvantage experienced by many Aboriginal people is a result of discriminatory legislation and policy that existed during the period 1905-1972.

(ii) Not applicable.

(c) – (c) (i) Refer to (b)(i).

(ii) Not applicable.

