



# Call for apology to children abused in institutions

By Emma Macdonald

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd should make a formal apology to children who were sexually, physically and mentally abused in institutional care – along the same lines as his apology to the Stolen Generations, according to a new parliamentary report.

State governments should also pay compensation to these survivors and parliament should name and shame churches and religious agencies which ran the institutions where documented cases of abuse occurred but which have failed to take responsibility for such abuse.

The *Lost Innocents and Forgotten Australians Revisited* report – issued yesterday – has tracked the progress of the recommendations of a 2004 report, *Forgotten Australians*, and the 2001 report *Lost Innocents*.

Those reports documented hundreds of accounts of child abuse and neglect of children, many indigenous, among the half a million children institutionalised during the 1940s, '50s, '60s and '70s.

The inquiries were established by

former Democrats senator Andrew Murray, who believed they rounded a trilogy of reports on the treatment of children in Australia after the earlier report *Bringing Them Home* by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

Yesterday's report, however, noted that children in institutionalised care were yet to receive a formal apology from the Federal Government.

The report said, "The evidence received by the committee during the current inquiry has shown that the response to the recommendations of the earlier inquiries by the Commonwealth and State governments, the churches and agencies has been variable."

While Queensland, Western Australia have set up reparation schemes for abuse victims and Tasmania is in the process of establishing a scheme, NSW, Victoria and South Australia have made no progress in this area.

Neither the ACT nor Northern Territory ran institutions for children, although a number of ACT

residents were institutionalised in NSW and have taken a keen interest in the inquiries. Committee member and ACT Liberal senator Gary Humphries said he was deeply disappointed on behalf of all Australians who suffered while in institutional care that so little progress had been made since the first report.

"There is absolutely no doubt many of them have suffered very traumatic experiences and they have been let down very badly by the system," he said.

He believed Mr Rudd would come under considerable pressure in his party room to make an apology.

The Alliance for Forgotten Australians has called for "an immediate, positive and comprehensive response to all 39 inquiry recommendations".

Alliance chair Caroline Carroll said, "There is a need for heightened public awareness of these issues and for moral leadership and practical responses from the Australian Government."



**HORROR:** Some British children arriving in Australia to start a new life ended up in institutions where abuse was prevalent