

# Stolen Generations survivors, descendants want WA redress scheme expanded

By Bridget McArthur and Samantha Goerling

ABC South West WA    Stolen Generations

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Stolen Generations members ineligible for WA's new redress scheme have delivered a blunt message.

## In short:

Several First Nations people say they were forcibly removed from their families in Western Australia after the cut-off date for the state's new redress scheme.

Children of Stolen Generations survivors who died waiting for reparations say their suffering must also be acknowledged.

## What's next?

Advocates are urging the state government to expand the scheme's eligibility criteria.

Standing with Western Australia's beaming premier on the steps of parliament, Angela Ryder smiled briefly for a photo.

**Readers are advised that this article may contain an image of Indigenous people who have died.**

The announcement of a [redress scheme for survivors of WA's Stolen Generations](#) was something the 62-year-old Goreng/Wiilmen Noongar woman had spent years fighting for as part of Yokai, a group of survivors who came together in 2013.

But for Ms Ryder and her sister Meredith Edmonds, the day was also bittersweet.



Meredith Edmonds and Angela Ryder were forcibly removed from their parents for the first time in 1973. (ABC News: Keana Naughton)

Authorities took them and their siblings from their family's farm near Tambellup, 320 kilometres south of Perth, to Roelands Native Mission in 1973, after the scheme's cut-off date of July 1, 1972, meaning they are not eligible for the reparation payments the scheme provides for.

"There was physical, emotional and sexual abuse that occurred during my time at the missions and also during my time in other state facilities," Ms Ryder said.

**"I know you've got to draw a line in the sand somewhere but to hear that date ... how does that address our trauma?"**

File No. .... Charge Nos. .... 10/1/73

1. Year: 1973 2. Serial No. .... 3. Appearance. ....

4. Name: EDMONDS ANGELA

5. Address: BELLA VISTA VIA TAMBELLUP 6. C.C.D. ....

7. Date of Birth: 12/11/73 8. Place of Birth: DENMARK

9. Relgn. .... 10. Sex: FEMALE 11. Posn in Family: 2/8 12. Siblings: 2F 5M

13. Court: KATANNING 14. Final Hearing Date: 16.11.73

15. Deptl. Recomm. COMMITTAL UNTIL 18 YEARS OF AGE

16. Court Decision: COMMITTED " " " " "

17. Court Recomm. WITH LIBERTY TO APPLY FOR MFPNCE UNDER SECTION 40A OF THE ACT

18. Deptl. Disposal: .....

19. Time and Date of Principal Offence: 12/11/73

20. Day of Week: MONDAY 21. No. of Previous App. NIL

22. Court Disposal: ..... 23. Year: ..... 24. Serial No. .... 1

25. No. of Previous Offences: NIL

26. Present Charges: APPLICATION FOR NEGLECT (SECT. 4 DEF. 10)

Court records show Angela Ryder née Edmonds was declared a neglected child. She can't recall any formal proceeding. (Supplied: Angela Ryder)

Ms Ryder was 10 years old when she was first put in Roelands.



She was later returned home, only to be forcibly removed again and twice sent to Wandering Mission, about 120km south-east of Perth.



Angela Ryder stands directly behind Roger Cook's right shoulder after the announcement of the redress scheme.  
(Supplied: Yokai)

Ms Edmonds was just six and was removed four times in total, spending time in Roelands, Wandering and Marribank.

Court records show the sisters were declared neglected and committed to state custody, though neither could recall ever attending court and both reported living a happy, stable life with their parents before they were taken.

A government report from that year shows children in WA could be committed to state care if their parents were found to be neglectful or if they themselves were deemed "neglected by virtue of his own behaviour".

### **Cut-off date reflects policy change**

The siblings will miss out on the \$85,000 individual payments to be offered to individual survivors.

But Ms Edmonds said what was more upsetting was the disregard for her lived experience.

"We were still getting assimilated and put into missions after that date," she said.

**"I don't understand how they can say it ceased."**



Angela Ryder says she and her sister were no less hurt by WA's forced removal policies. (ABC News: Keana Naughton)

The state government told the ABC the cut-off date aligned with when the Native Welfare Act 1963 was repealed, replaced with the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority Act 1972.

The new act abolished the Department of Native Welfare and created the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority, which was no longer directly involved in out-of-home care for Aboriginal children in WA, though records show it continued to fund missions into the 1980s.

A national inquiry into the Stolen Generations found about one in 10 Aboriginal people in WA were in institutions in 1972, the majority children.

The report showed the number of children committed to state care started to decline around this time but removals did continue.

The Healing Foundation, an organisation supporting Stolen Generations survivors and their families, said it could take some time for shifts in practice to follow legislative change.

**"Other [states' redress] schemes have been flexible in their time frames to acknowledge sentiment doesn't change the day a policy is abolished," a spokesperson said.**





Angela Ryder campaigning for redress with Yokai in 2023. (Supplied: Yokai)

### 'At least pay for our funerals'

Binjareb Noongar woman Alice Kearing said there were many more Stolen Generations survivors in WA removed after the cut-off date, including herself.

She was taken to Roelands in 1974, aged four.



A photograph displayed at Roelands of when it was a mission. It is now a village where survivors come to heal. (ABC South West WA: Bridget McArthur)

Earlier this year, the 55-year-old was invited to share her own experiences at a series of events about WA's Stolen Generations.

She was in the middle of one such presentation in late May when news of the redress scheme broke.

"They talked about a cut-off date ... I didn't know how to react," Ms Kearing said.

"I felt like, 'What was I doing here? What was I doing, doing this presentation?'

**"It was a win for us. Not a big win, but it's something. But it wasn't a big win for me."**



Ms Kearing said she immediately thought of her brothers, who had spent much of their time at Roelands trying to protect her, and would also miss out.

**"What happened to them was pretty severe. I witnessed them getting floggings," she said.**

"They were my heroes ... that's a scar that won't go away ever."

Ms Ryder and Ms Edmonds have called for the cut-off date to be based on when the state's last missions closed in the late 1980s.

Ms Kearing said the cut-off date should be removed altogether.

**"If they can't give us the same compensation ... at least pay for our funerals," she said.**

"Take that burden off my family."

### **Survivors who died waiting**

First Nations people taken after the cut-off date are not the only survivors to miss out on reparations.

Many members of the Stolen Generations taken within the eligible time frame died waiting for the WA government to commit to a redress scheme.

Noongar woman Isobel Bevis's mother was one of eight siblings torn from their parents and country in 1960.



Isobel Bevis's mum was a Stolen Generations member who died before the redress scheme was announced. (ABC News: Samantha Goerling)

Only two of them are still alive.

Ms Bevis said their deaths were not a "get out of jail free" card for the government.

**"They have families that are still living, families that are still impacted by the trauma and the abuse that happened," she said.**



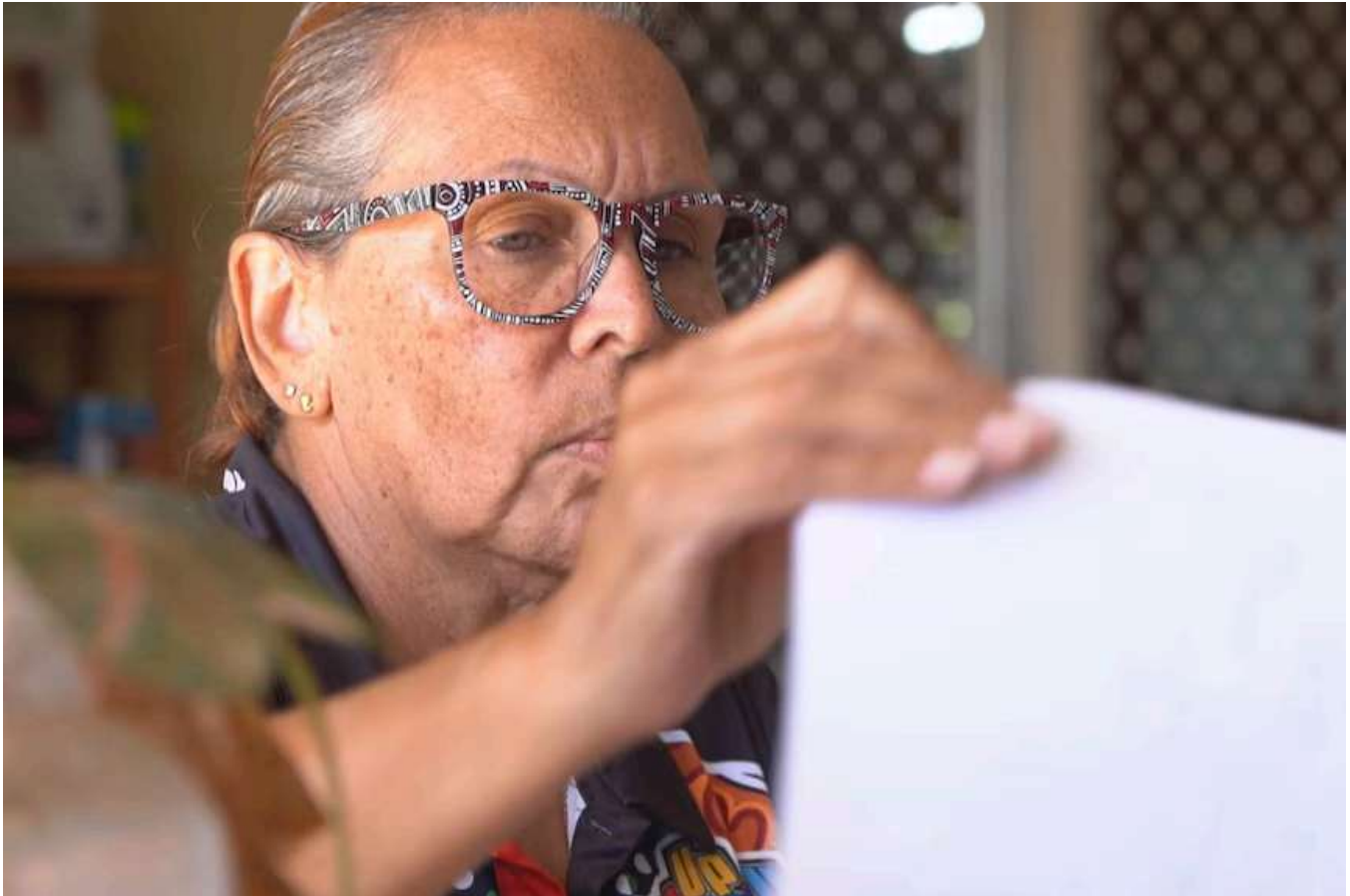
Isobel Bevis has written to the premier outlining her concerns about the redress scheme. *(ABC News: Samantha Goerling)*

"I think it's disrespectful ... of Premier Roger Cook to exclude those that have passed."

Ms Bevis has written to Mr Cook asking him to reconsider the eligibility criteria.

In a petition to the state government, Kariyarra Noongar woman Sharon Todd additionally advocated for repatriation and counselling programs to be funded, as well as headstones for those who have died.





Sharon Todd is petitioning the state government to expand the redress scheme. *(ABC News: Charlie McLean)*

Ms Todd's late parents were both members of the Stolen Generations, and in 2021, she established WA's first Indigenous funeral service.

"[The criteria] is putting a bandaid over the wounds of some without looking at all of us," she said.

"Not knowing our language and not knowing the extended relationships ... it makes it really difficult to move forward with confidence and clarity of where we belong."

A 1997 inquiry by the Australian Human Rights Commission into the Stolen Generations said descendants should be included in reparations to acknowledge the long-lasting intergenerational trauma caused by forced removals.

This has not been written into WA's redress scheme, despite Mr Cook acknowledging in his speech in May that the forced removal of children had

"caused cycles of disadvantage and intergenerational trauma".

The state government said the scheme was focused on living individuals who suffered as a result of their removal but that survivors of those who died after the scheme was announced could apply on their behalf.

"The WA government is working with Stolen Generations organisations on additional measures to address healing and truth-telling," a spokesperson said.

The scheme is expected to open to applications later this year.

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