

Australian apology to British child migrants: speech in full

Kevin Rudd, the Australian prime minister, has issued an apology to the 7,000 former child migrants who were taken from Britain and put into state-run homes in Australia where they suffered abuse and neglect. Here is his speech in full:

Today, the Government of Australia will move the following motion of apology in the Parliament of Australia.

We come together today to deal with an ugly chapter in our nation's history.

And we come together today to offer our nation's apology.

To say to you, the Forgotten Australians, and those who were sent to our shores as children without your consent, that we are sorry.

Sorry – that as children you were taken from your families and placed in institutions where so often you were abused.

Sorry – for the physical suffering, the emotional starvation and the cold absence of love, of tenderness, of care.

Sorry – for the tragedy, the absolute tragedy, of childhoods lost, – childhoods spent instead in austere and authoritarian places, where names were replaced by numbers, spontaneous play by regimented routine, the joy of learning by the repetitive drudgery of menial work.

Sorry – for all these injustices to you, as children, who were placed in our care.

As a nation, we must now reflect on those who did not receive proper care.

We look back with shame that many of you were left cold, hungry and alone and with nowhere to hide and nobody to whom to turn.

We look back with shame that so many of you were left cold, hungry and alone and with nowhere to hide and with nobody, absolutely nobody, to whom to turn.

We look back with shame that many these little ones who were entrusted to institutions and foster homes instead, were abused physically, humiliated cruelly, violated sexually.

And we look back with shame at how those with power were allowed to abuse those who had none.

And how then, as if this was not injury enough, you were left ill-prepared for life outside – left to fend for yourselves; often unable to read or write; to struggle alone with no friends and no family.

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