



26th May 2022

UNSW SRC (Student Representative Council) Statement on National Sorry Day

In making this statement, the UNSW SRC recognises that today 26th of May 2022 is National Sorry Day. Today is about reflecting on the history of trauma that First Nations communities were exposed to and continue to be exposed to – through institutional intervention, excessive use of policing and social interference and most devastatingly, through loss of connection to community, culture, language, and stories. National Sorry Day was first held on the 26th of May 1998, one year after the ‘Bringing Them Home’ report was released – a result of government inquiries into Aboriginal children being forcibly removed from families and communities due to policies at the time.

However, as stated by the Healing Foundation, “Despite the 1997 *Bringing Them Home* report, the 2008 Apology to the Stolen Generations, and many other inquiries – there have been more than 20 reports in the last 12 years alone – there has still been no systematic government response to the needs and rights of the Stolen Generations and their descendants.”

The incoming Labor Government has overwhelmingly supported the Uluru Statement from the Heart which is a positive step. In supporting this, we recognise extensive work needs to be done by all of us to support First Nations communities, students, and staff members to ensure they get to bring their whole selves to work and learn every day and live in a safe, anti-racist world that does not continue to hold them back by relying on institutional actions and injustices.

While we open-heartedly welcome the commitment and support extended by the Labor Government, we encourage them to abide by their promises and ensure that First Nations communities are actively consulted and included in every step of the way when making such historical changes.

As allies at the UNSW SRC, our commitment lies primarily with supporting our Indigenous Collective and reflecting on how we can step up to create a welcoming and supportive environment that enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff to succeed.

The message of this year’s National Sorry Day is to create a safe space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to heal. Healing cannot happen until we as allies acknowledge the truth, the traumatic history, and the present inaction.

We call on the University and other public institutions and the government to adopt an intersectional lens in addressing these issues and urge all of you to exercise your right as civil citizens to push the public offices to do more, to protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and children, to keep them safe mentally, physically, and socially and to continue listening to First Nation communities.

Nayonika Bhattacharya,
UNSW SRC President 2022

