

Hansard Forgotten Australians Motion 26/11/2009
Various ministers who spoke on the day
for the motion.
Day 5

APOLOGY TO THE FORGOTTEN AUSTRALIANS
AND FORMER CHILD MIGRANTS

Order of the day returned from Main Committee for further consideration; certified copy of the motion presented.

The SPEAKER—The question is that the motion be agreed to.

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga—Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs) (1.14 pm)—On indulgence, I just want to take a moment of the House's time to share with everyone the responses that we have had to the Prime Minister's apology to the forgotten Australians and former child migrants and, in doing so, I want to particularly acknowledge the member for Corio, the member for Blaxland and the member for Swan for their very, very strong support in the whole organisation of this apology and making it happen. One woman has come back to us saying:

It was a wonderful day for many of us and it is certainly the beginning of healing or a step further down the road. As someone more famous than me said, 'Even the longest journey starts with the first step.'

And another said:

I'm happy that mothers and other family members received an apology. I will now put this apology on my mother's grave. The apology and public acknowledgment that our leaders are now aware of what happened and now believe us supports me and makes us feel better. Knowing how many care leavers there are makes me feel united in a big family.

In reflecting on the event itself here, in Parliament House, we have had the following statement reflected by so many people, and this is just one. It states:

Seeing our people who have lived lives bereft of hope and respect mix freely in our parliament where they were the important people of the day complemented wonderfully our Prime Minister's speech and intended antidote of healing. I was very moved by this.

The following is a wonderful email from one person who was really thanking all of the fantastic volunteers and staff from my department. I, too, put my thanks on the record. I think this person really sums up how the forgotten Australians and former child migrants felt. He wrote:

I could not have asked for better care—ironic, when we were all there because of an earlier lack of care. You and your team of volunteers were the nicest people we could meet. All my life I have felt that I did not deserve the kindness of strangers, so it makes it all the more special that you and your team who did not know me from a bar of soap went to so much trouble. I still cannot shake the notion of 'why would you bother with me?' but I am so grateful you did.

Mr CLARE (Blaxland—Parliamentary Secretary for Employment) (1.17 pm)—On indulgence, we cannot underestimate the power of this apology in healing what are in many cases very broken lives, but we are also moving forward with practical measures and today our response to the Senate inquiry into forgotten Australians and child migrants will be tabled in the Senate.

The SPEAKER—The question is that the motion be agreed to. I ask all honourable members to signify their approval by rising in their places.
Question agreed to, honourable members standing in their places.

PASSED