



□Narelle Unmeopa and Penny Schubert listen to a broadcast of Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's apology to indigenous Australians this week.

## Symbolic apology delivers powerful message

ANGLICAN Community Care has applauded the Federal Government on its historic apology and use of the word sorry to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of the Stolen Generation.

The agency's chief executive officer Robert Foggo said the Stolen Generations were children who were removed because of their race, not because of neglect by parents.

"If only one of their parents was of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent that was generally enough reason to remove children from the family," he said.

"This meant that because of

lightness or darkness of skin colour some children stayed with their parents and others were removed, fragmenting families for many years and in some cases never coming together again."

Aboriginal programs coordinator Frances Day said the apology was an acknowledgment by the government of former injustices.

"I do not see the apology as a non-Aboriginal person saying they are personally responsible for the Stolen Generations," she said.

"But rather as an acknowledgement by the government that there was bad government

policy and there were children who were stolen from their Aboriginal families."

She said the Aboriginal community could now move forward and start the healing process.

"To understand more about the Stolen Generation I encourage people to watch the film *Rabbit Proof Fence*," Ms Day said.

"The symbolism of the government apology and use of the word sorry is what is important to me.

"We have symbols for many things across all cultures and all countries.

"We have flags, songs, art,

business brand logos, etcetera, and the symbolism of a government saying sorry for past actions is a powerful message.

"The word 'sorry' to many in the Aboriginal community is used to describe the rituals surrounding death (sorry business).

"Sorry, when used by the Aboriginal community is often used to express empathy or sympathy rather than responsibility.

"So, when we hear a non-Aboriginal person saying 'sorry' over the stolen generation it is in this manner we hear it."