

# Shine Bright LLCE Cycle Terminal

## Snapfile 10 Stolen

A stolen boy p. 121

**Susan Carland:** John was one of thousands of Aboriginal children who grew up never knowing his mother. First he was placed in an orphanage and told by the missionaries that he had to be white. Then they sent John to Kinchela, a boys' home on the Macleay River, hundreds of miles from his home.

**Bruce Scates:** John was just ten years of age when an iron gate clanged shut behind him. That same iron gate is the object of this episode, and 30 years on John remembered every moment vividly.

[Reading from oral history testimony]

'They took your bag from you, everything you owned, and threw it on a fire. Then they shaved your hair, they stripped you down, they made you dress in clothes stamped with a number. They never called you by your name, they called you by your number. Kinchela was a place they treated you like animals.'

**Susan Carland:** John remained at Kinchela for all that was left of his childhood and, in a way, his childhood was taken from him.

**Bruce Scates:** [Reading] 'All you did was work, work, work. We never went into the town – the boys' home was just a prison.'

**Susan Carland:** Kinchela was a place of physical and emotional maltreatment. White managers and white staff controlled the lives of Aboriginal children. Sometimes they even sexually abused them. And for the most part, the authorities turned a blind eye – at Kinchela, at Cootamundra girls' home, at institutions for the so-called 'half-caste' children right across the country.

**Bruce Scates:** Susan and I have been charting the way that legislation evolved in this dusty collection of old parliamentary papers. All these Acts – Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland, and so on – have a number of things in common. They

decreed where Aboriginal people would live, they displaced them from their traditional lands and they drove them into missions and reserves managed by white authorities.

Jane Harrison speaking p. 123

["What did writing this play mean for you personally?"]

**Jane Harrison:** I have Aboriginal heritage through my mother and I'd grown up always knowing I was Aboriginal but hadn't had a close connection with the Aboriginal community. So, this was an opportunity for me to become more connected and find out why I felt so strongly in myself, connected. Um, so it was a learning experience the whole way and I did feel a huge responsibility: I'm not a Stolen Generations person and neither is my mother, and to be the conduit for these kind of stories, you know, I did feel both that was a privilege and a burden, you know, the responsibility to get it right. And I do remember when it premiered, I had an Aboriginal woman come up to me, at the end I didn't know her, and she put her head down and she said, "You got it right." And for me that was so important to get it right for those people who had had those experiences.

["What would you say to someone wanting to produce the play?"]

**Jane Harrison:** And I think the other really interesting issue around that is, um, obviously there's quite a few requests from schools to do *Stolen*, they want to do it as a school performance, and I will ask Aboriginal people participating in that process. And often, there's not, they don't have Aboriginal students at the school, and so I encourage them to make a connection in their local communities and find someone who can talk about the stories and make sure that, you know, they're doing it the right way. So, I'm not necessarily against non-Aboriginal young people accessing those stories, and performing them, as long as they do it in a respectful, and as long as they seek, I suppose, a bit of wisdom from their local communities.

## Stop stealing our children! p. 124

**Voice-over:** With around six thousand Aboriginal children currently in out-of-home care in New South Wales, these grandmothers have had enough of staying quiet. They say it's now time to speak on behalf of their children, and other families who feel unable to speak, against a system that is accused of creating a new Stolen Generation.

**David Shoebridge:** When the "Bringing Them Home" report was released in 1997 about the Stolen Generations, there were a little under three thousand Aboriginal kids in long-term care across Australia. Rewind through to 2012 and there's been effectively a five-fold increase in the number of children being taken from Aboriginal families across Australia.

**Mary Moore:** Some of these children are then forcibly adopted and the current New South Wales Minister Pru Goward wants to make forced adoptions a priority for children in care. Adoption is for orphans, not for children who have loving families. It is un-Australian.

**Voice-over:** Six years ago, then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd apologised to the Stolen Generations for past Australian policies of forced removal.

**Kevin Rudd:** To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry.

**Voice-over:** But today, that apology holds little meaning to these grandmothers.

**Karen Fusi:** "Sorry?" They're still doing it. They're still taking our children.