



Building trust across the world's divides

Initiatives of Change

PRESS RELEASE

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Leading campaigner for apology to Aborigines will speak in London

John Bond, former Secretary of Australia's National Sorry Day Committee and member of the Stolen Generations Alliance, will speak on

Australia's journey of healing

at a Greencoat Forum in London on 13 May at 6.30pm.

The first act of Australia's new parliament, last February, was to apologise to the Stolen Generations – the tens of thousands of Indigenous Australians removed from their families as children in order to assimilate them into white society. This misguided and cruel policy was dramatised in the film *Rabbit Proof Fence*.

How did the apology come about? John Bond will tell the behind-the-scenes story. "Every country," he says, "has issues on the national conscience and those issues need to be brought out into the open in order to be healed."

It has been 11 years since an inquiry brought to Australia's attention the tragic effects of the removal policies. The then Australian Government refused to apologise. Many Australians disagreed, and a movement for reconciliation grew. When a Sorry Day was held in 1998, nearly a million people got involved. In 2000 a million people walked across bridges in all Australian cities, calling for an apology and other steps to transform the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Many joined the Journey of Healing campaign, and have taken action in their own localities to heal the damage done.

As Secretary of the National Sorry Day Committee for eight years, and then an Executive member of the Stolen Generations Alliance, John Bond has been at the heart of this movement. In 2007 he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for this work.

He will tell the dramatic story of the 10-year struggle which led to Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's apology, and to a new national determination to enable Indigenous Australians to play their full, unique role in the life of Australia.

John Bond is available for interview.

The monthly Greencoat Forums are held at the London centre of Initiatives of Change, an international body which aims to build "relationships of trust across the world's divides".

Refreshments from 6.30pm; talk at 7.15pm, ending 9pm.

Entry is free but space is limited to 100. RSVP to: reception@london.iofc.org.

Tel: 020 7798 6000.

*The Greencoat Forums, 24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1RD, tel: 020 7798 6000
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