

## NT Stolen Generations organisation closes, facing audit over alleged misuse of funds

By Rosa Ellen

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*PHOTO: Staff at the Central Australian Stolen Generations corporation pack up their things*

**An organisation that reunites family members torn apart through the Stolen Generations has been forced to close due to funding cuts and is being audited over "compliance issues".**

The Central Australian Stolen Generations and Families Aboriginal Corporation (CASG&FAC) runs a link up service from Alice Springs that has been organising reunions since the landmark Bringing Them Home report was released in 1998.

"It's going to affect everyone, [there's not] an Aboriginal family that doesn't have a Stolen Generation member in it," CASG&FAC head Jackie Baxter said.

The corporation said the loss of its funding for the service came through a failed application to the Indigenous Advancement Strategy funding.

But a spokesperson for the Minister for Indigenous Affairs Nigel Scullion said it terminated the corporation's Link Up contract after it "identified compliance issues including the possible misuse of Commonwealth funds" relating to receipts.

CASG&FAC strongly disputes that allegation.

The corporation said it has had no word on who will take over the service and would have 10 years worth of client history to handover.

Ms Baxter said news of the funding cut came as the service's Perth counterpart got in touch to say that after three years, it had found the long-lost brother of an elderly Central Australian woman living on a remote community.

"[She has] been a client here for many, many years and she's been awaiting a reunion and she's on dialysis and she doesn't have very long to live," Ms Baxter said.

"Unfortunately we do not have the funding and we are not able to do [a reunion]."

Ms Baxter said the service would have had to stop work on four other reunions.

Counsellor Wahid Brandso said the organisation has loyal staff who understand the histories of the people they work for.

"There's a lot of corporate knowledge," he said.

"Knowing the families, the names, the histories going back many generations and knowing how to investigate and find out who they're related to."

The Member for Lingiari and former Indigenous affairs minister, Warren Snowden, said the service is integral to keeping the promise of the Bringing Them Home report.

"I am most concerned that Link Up Services continue to be provided in Central Australia for all the reasons outlined in the Bringing Them Home report.

"It is vital that these services must continue."