

Student resource sheet

Introduction to the stolen wages issue

Before you begin the activities, read page 138 of *The Little Red Yellow Black Book* to find out about the stolen wages issue. Then read the information below. The activities on these worksheets relate to this issue.

Definitions

Reparations — money that is owed to people to cover financial losses caused directly by the payer.

Compensation — money that is paid to people as a way of trying to make up for something unfair happening to them.

Key facts

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers had portions of their wages stolen from the year 1904 up to the 1970s.
- The Queensland government set aside \$56.6 million to pay reparations in 2002, but capped the payouts at \$4000 per person. In other words, they would not pay anyone more than \$4000, regardless of how much they were owed.
- In 2007 more than 5500 claimants received money in the first payment round in Queensland, with 1342 of those receiving just \$2000 and more than 3000 people knocked back because of a lack of government records.
- Some state governments also asked Indigenous people to waive their rights to further legal action. This means that once they accepted a low offer of reparation, they would not legally be allowed to ask for any more money owed to them.
- \$5.8 million in reparations had been paid out to 3000 eligible claimants under the government's \$21 million Stolen Wages Reparations Scheme.
- It is important to note that any money paid in an effort to resolve the stolen wages issue is *not compensation*, but reparation. It is rightfully the people's money, legally earned by their work over many years and stolen by a corrupt governmental system and sometimes by corrupt employers.

Source

<https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/national/queensland/aboriginal-stolen-wages-lawsuit-as-important-as-mabo-to-go-national-20160913-grexm8.html>