

Men apologise

ABORIGINAL MEN SAY SORRY FOR ABUSE AND VIOLENCE

· Hundreds of Aboriginal men from across Australia have issued an historic apology to their women for the "pain, hurt and suffering" indigenous men have caused them. In the icy desert of Central Australia, men of all age groups from Cape York, the Top End, Central Australia, NSW and WA recently met to discuss ways to be better fathers, husbands and sons. They also sought to repair the damage caused in the 12 months since their communities were denounced as hotbeds of violence and abuse.

Pray this will be a real change in the hearts and lives of all men in this land.

Since the federal intervention to combat child sex abuse was launched in June last year, John Liddle - from the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress - said Aboriginal men had been painted as brutal and uncaring. Mr Liddle told the gathering at Ross River outside of Alice Springs. "We need to acknowledge the hurt and pain that has been caused by violence which has shamed many indigenous males who are not violent." But he conceded good men had sat in silence, and now felt they needed to issue a collective apology.

"We the Aboriginal males from Central Australia and our brothers from around Australia ... acknowledge and say sorry for the hurt, pain and suffering caused by Aboriginal males," the statement said. "We also acknowledge that we need the love and support of our Aboriginal women to help us move forward."

One of the authors of the report which sparked the Howard Government's emergency response, Rex Wild QC, said the apology was "very powerful and very moving". He said child abuse was not just an Aboriginal problem and it had been unfair of governments to single them out. "They are not acknowledging there is a higher rate - they are acknowledging there is a rate, that there is a level of domestic violence that they have now said sorry for," he said.

Joe Hayes, a father who lives on an outstation 25km from Alice Springs, said he walked away from the gathering "a proud Aborigine". "We have got to try and be responsible parents and our attitudes have got to change ... saying sorry is the best part of healing," he said.

Source: Compiled by Australian Prayer Network from media reports

