

Solomon Lecture: The importance of truth through Aboriginal eyes.

RHIANNA PATRICK	Before we begin, as is protocol for the lands on which this event is being held on, I'd like to invite Baringa Barambah to officially welcome us to country.
	(Welcome to Country song)
BARINGA BARAMBAH	- Intentionally left blank -
AUDIENCE	(inaudible responses)
BARINGA	- Intentionally left blank -

	(Blessing of the Gathering song)
BARINGA	- Intentionally left blank -
RHIANNA	<p>Thanks so much, Baringa for that welcome. I'm Rhianna Patrick, and welcome to the 2022 Solomon Lecture, hosted by the Office of the Information Commissioner, QIC Queensland, in partnership with the State Library of Queensland. A warm welcome to those that are in the room, but also to those joining us via the live stream. Now, just a bit of housekeeping for those that are in this room. Toilets are just outside the door, directly opposite this auditorium. If you have any food or drink, it is not allowed in the auditorium, unless it's kept in the bag or the bottle that you bought them into the venue with. In case of an emergency, please follow the instructions of the venue officer, who'll instruct you on where to go should you, should that need arise. And if you are planning to enter, or re-enter or leave the venue or to come back in, can you please use the entrance at the back and not the entrance at the front. Now the Solomon Lecture has become an integral way of marking international access to information day or IAI day for short on the 28th of September each year. And this year's IAI day, UNESCO appointed theme is artificial intelligence, E Governance and access to information. Information is essential for democratic societies in a world of myths and disinformation, and access to information I think has never been so vital. And while there are many opportunities that come with the digital age, there are also risks which this theme aims to highlight, but also some other things that you might now have thought about, in terms of access to information, like what is the place of information for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders? What information matters and what information are known that our original people want to hear and be, and that need to be heard. And so I know that this is something that today's</p>

	<p>speaker is going to touch on, but before you hear from him, it gives me great pleasure in welcoming the Information Commissioner, Rachael Rangihaeata.</p>
<p>RACHAEL RANGIHAEATA</p>	<p>Thank you very much. I would first like to acknowledge the Turrbal and Yuggera peoples, traditional custodians of the land [unintelligible – “(ui)”] in which, on which we’re gathered today. I pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging, and acknowledge their continued connection to the land, water and culture of this area. I extend that respect to First Nations peoples here today and joining us on the live stream. I would like to acknowledge and extend my appreciation to Mr Ian Hamm, our Solomon Lecturer today. Guest panellists, Miss Patricia Thompson and Mr Rose Barrowcliffe. I also thank and acknowledge Miss Kathy Franklin, manager, Community and Personal Histories team in the Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships. And Miss Louise Howard, Queensland state archivist. And Miss Sonia Boyd, research and evaluation lead of the Healing Foundation, for their support and assistance in planning this event with our great team. I acknowledge Dr David Solomon, in whose honour this lecture is now held. I also take this opportunity to acknowledge my fellow information access and privacy Commissioners and Ombudsman. Information is empowering. The right to seek and receive information is a fundamental human right and often supports other human rights. Information can change lives. It can change your story. It can ensure you can make an informed view and participate in a consultation or a court process and affect decisions important to you, your community or culture. In the many years I've been involved in public service and the business of right to information, I would say it most often comes down to people being unable to understand why in some way. Government agencies serve and interact with the community in a wide range of ways, from education, health services, infrastructure to policing, natural disaster management and assistance. From the individual impact to local community, through to broader interest of development or environmental protection programs on the Great Barrier Reef,</p>

Queenslanders have a right to access information, unless it would be contrary to the public interest. Today, the International Day for universal access to information, celebrated around the world, include with activities including a global UNESCO conference that commences this afternoon. The 2022 theme is artificial intelligence, E governance and access to information. Governments are increasingly providing digital solutions for the community and this is accelerated during the pandemic, over the last few years. As important benefits are gained through the use of AI, for example, and streamlining processes, decision making and smarter cities, it is essential accountability, transparency and citizens right to information are paramount. AI and E governance also have the real potential to improve access to information, overcoming some of the inherent difficulties of information management that make efficient and effective searching for information, a key issue for timely and fulsome access. We encourage government agencies to review how they use AI, look at their systems and business practises, and reaffirm their commitment to improving access to information for the community in the digital age, including publishing when AI technology is used to make or assist decisions, and what personal information is used. As with the adoption of any technology, it is critical that information management implications are carefully considered and addressed at the design stage. Community members affected by decisions using AI should be able to use timely and easy information access processes, including proactive and administrative release, unless there is a good reason not to. Key concerns have been raised in 2022 about transparency, accountability and openness in Queensland. Professor Coldrake's review, Let the Sunshine In, about culture and accountability in Queensland, in the Queensland Public Service, raised concerns about trust and transparency. Concerns have also been raised about the extent of ongoing delays occurring in accessing information from agencies, which have resulted in applicants seeking external review with our office, when decisions are not made within statutory timeframes. We've engaged with key agencies to identify how timeliness can be improved and we've now started an audit

into the timeliness of access to information and three agencies experiencing higher levels of delays. In right to information, people, people often say, delay is denial. When people have a specific purpose that has a time frame, delays can mean an outcome is of reduced or no value. Ian stressed to us the urgency of improving access to records for stolen generation victims and their families. The sad truth is many victims have been waiting their whole lives for this information and want to know before they go and share with their families. There is no time for protracted processes. Delay here may also have implications for other rights, including cultural human rights. I note that 25 years ago, the Bringing Them Home report stated, the right of Indigenous self determination requires that Indigenous people should be able to freely access information, critical to their history and survival as peoples. Further, access to records must be made easier and less hurtful. This involves improving access procedures, ensuring cultural appropriate access. Australian Access Information Commissioners and privacy authorities have been united in their commitment to working together with the Healing Foundation and stakeholders to champion timely, easy access to records through informal, informal access schemes wherever possible, with formal access applications required, only as a last resort. My colleagues recognise the important role of historical records and truth telling and sharing history, intergenerational healing, redress and reparations for stolen generations, survivors and their families. In Queensland, we've been very fortunate to have a successful model of administrative release for family history information, through the dedicated Community and Personal Histories team and the Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Partnerships led by Kathy Franklin, who is here today. This expert team provide a working example of what the Healing Foundation principles seek as a more informal process to request information that is easier, easy, timelier than formal access applications and provided in a trauma aware environment, closely linked with support organisations like Linkup Queensland. It is important that government leaders prioritise our specialised and formal request processes to ensure they continue to be

	<p>highly effective for the community. I once again thank our speakers and our audience for their participation. I encourage our audience to not turn away from truth telling. One of my first memories living in Australia as a 12 year old, after moving from Aotearoa, New Zealand was being confused why my teacher was only talking about white history in Australia, having grown up immersed as a proud Kiwi in Maori culture at home and throughout the school curriculum in the 80s. I asked, but what about the Aboriginal people that were here first and was promptly dismissed as a troublemaker and sent to the principal's office. It was no surprise that most of the First Nations kids that I was at school with, didn't even bother coming into my classroom. I became part of a proud Maori family, almost 30 years ago when I mar-, I didn't marry my husband at 19, but I joined the family. And I'm a mum now, to a some Maori teens, who are also extremely proud of their culture and are fortunate to have, they have heard stories throughout their lives from their Whanau family since they were young, about their ancestors. Increasingly, we can easily find historical and new information about their (ui) line of descent on the internet through the New Zealand National Library and the Te Papa Museum and other sources. Culture, connection and country is important to my family and many of you watching across Australia, have the capacity to make it easier for survivors of the stolen generation to access the information for intergenerational healing. Thank you for watching today and thank you to our speakers.</p>
<p>RHIANNA</p>	<p>Thank you, Commissioner. Now to the Solomon Lecture. This year's lecture will be delivered by Ian Hamm. Ian is a Yorta Yorta man from Shepperton in central Victoria and a member of the stolen generation. He's been actively involved in the Victorian Aboriginal community for many years and he's the chairman of the Healing Foundation, Stolen Generations Reference Group and has extensive government and community sector experience, particularly at executive and governance levels. He's overseen major policy and strategic reforms for government and community organisations. And there's a lot more I could say about him, but I condensed it down for you because he has done so much in</p>

	<p>his life and for the community. And Ian's lecture today is entitled, the importance of truth through Aboriginal eyes. Please welcome Ian Hamm.</p>
<p>IAN HAMM</p>	<p>Thank you for that, Rhianna. And I sometimes think when people talk about me that, that's not me, that's somebody else. That person's far too flash for me. Firstly, I'd like to, and most importantly, I'd like to acknowledge the Turrbal and Yagara people on whose country we meet today, and I'd particularly like to thank Baringa for that wonderful welcome. Welcome to country is really important and I want to pay my respects to the elders, past and present. I do that not just because it's protocol to do it. It's actually a sincere thank you, from me for welcoming us onto their country and affording us the privilege and the comfort that makes us feel like we belong. It's incredibly important to belong somewhere, even if it's for a short period of time for a particular thing. But that's what welcome to country is. It makes us feel like we have a place and we belong. So before I go further, there's probably two caveats I need to put on today's talk. Number one, even though I wrote this, I do adlib. You'll be able to pick it when I do, so I just want to put that there. And the other one is, it's always dangerous to give me a microphone and audience and a licence to say what I want. So I thank you for asking me to do this today, Rachael. But you never know, you might regret that soon. I hope not. But I'll do my best. The other thing is too, there are no slides, there's no PowerPoint. I don't use PowerPoint, if I can help it. So no death by PowerPoint today. So you're in luck. What you've got to look at, is me. Which in itself might be a great thing, but we'll just work with that. I'd also like to particularly acknowledge the other Commissioners who are online and with us today, and I'd also, and especially like to acknowledge the other Aboriginal people in the room today. It's incredibly important to do that, as a matter of protocol. It's incredibly important because it's saying that Aboriginal people have a place in these discussions, that we belong here as well. I'd also like to acknowledge Dr David Solomon. As you all know, his commitment to not only transparency of government but the principle that people have a right to know, is why we're here today. And I hope to honour and</p>

continue the work that he has dedicated his, his life to. But before I go further, I do want to make something clear. I'm not here to beat anyone up. I'm not here to recount the historical truths that are becoming increasingly known by ordinary Australians. I would encourage you, though, to watch the excellent series on SBS, the Australian Wars, as the next step in your learning, as the next step of information, to teach you about, the whole history of our country. Rather than talk about the what, I want to discuss the why. Why is it important, why looking through the eyes of Aboriginal people is important? What does it bring to us as individuals and as a nation? How does it add to who we are? More deeply, why do, why do I, as an Aboriginal man, believe it is important for me to revisit painful events? What good can come of it for me and for others? Truthfully I've asked myself that question many, many times. Why do I do this to myself? The answers, like the questions are many, varied and changing and challenging. So let's start with the example I know well, the individual, specifically the one I know best, me. I am one of the stolen generations, or as I prefer to call us, the stolen children. Because that's what we were, children. I sometimes think the term, members of the stolen generations makes it sound like some sort of a club. Trust me, it's not a club you want to belong to. As you would appreciate, for me, finding who I was born, where I was from was paramount. Put simply, how would I know, how do I know where I should be going, if I don't know where I'm from and where I have been? The vacuum of knowing how I came about was for me like a black hole, a vast expanse of nothingness that held its secrets with no chance of anything escaping. I was separated from my family, community, culture and country, when I was three weeks old. The nothingness of knowing anything was real. Except this black hole had left two bread crumbs for me. My adopted mum told me when she and dad picked me up at the adoption home. The woman who handed me over said to her, I shouldn't be telling you this, we're not supposed to, but besides being Aboriginal, he has some Indian blood in him. And he was given the name Andrew James. Two Christian names. In the scheme of things, these seemingly big bread crumbs, these were seemingly big bread

crumbs, except to a child they were almost meaningless. I was just growing up in Yarrawonga in Victoria, one of three Aboriginal children in a town of 3200 people. The other two were my sisters, also Aboriginal babies adopted by mum and dad. It wasn't till I was 18 and left Yarrawonga to go to College in Bendigo, that these two bits of information came into their own. Information takes many forms and it was these two things, which probably made the biggest impact on who I am. In talking to one of the first Aboriginal people I met, apart from my sisters, he asked me if I knew anything about myself. So I told him, thinking it would be as mystifying and as meaningless to him, as it was to me. He looked at me and said, ah okay, I think I know who you are. Leave it with me and I'll get back to you. This was the first time I also learned about the concept of Kurri time. Or Aboriginal time, or whatever you wanna call it. So get back to you in white fellas terms, might mean a week, a fortnight. Six months later someone gets back to me. Evidently my information was passed on the Victorian Aboriginal Childcare Agency, who looked into it. A case worker came up to Bendigo and took me through my story. Who I was, who I was born, who my birth family was. What my name was. And as it turns out, Andrew James weren't two Christian names, but one Christian name, Andrew. And a surname James. Suddenly I have whole lot of information. That, by the way, is one half hour of my life, I will never ever forget. Actually it was probably an hour, but it just seemed it just went so quick and yet I had all this stuff. I had a name. I had siblings. I had cousins. I had uncles and aunties. I had a place, Shepparton. I had a mother who died in 1966, two years after I was born. Another black hole, another vacuum. To cut to the chase, I met my birth family and have a wonderful relationship with them. They are my family and they ground me, my Aboriginality. I am also just as much a part of the family that adopted me and brought me up. But the one event that I will never forget to this day, is the, is the day I got my papers. You know the papers. The one most people don't have. The one, the ones that have your original birth certificate, before you were adopted and given a new birth certificate. The one that has your mother's name on it. The one that has your name on it. And other

papers as well. Particularly, there is one that I called the document that changed me. And created two people. This one starts off identifying me as one person, as one person, Andrew James, and at the end of it, it identifies me as another person. Ian Hamm. I'm still the same person, but on that day that paper creates two people, the Andrew James who might have been and the Ian Hamm who is. How important was it for me to get these documents? You can't imagine it. Up to this day, up until that day, the day I sat in a room with other adoptees, all non-Aboriginal by the way. Everything I'd learned about myself, from my families and others were still unconfirmed. At least in my mind, if not in the minds of others. Am I really Andrew James or has there been a dreadful mistake? What do I do if I, if someone says to me prove it? What if I'm someone else? Does that mean I have to start all over again? Can I do this again? I'm not sure. Thankfully, I didn't have to contemplate this scenario. The documents confirmed everything I'd been told. And it was all there in black and white on paper. In my eyes, though, these weren't just a set of papers. They were confirmation that I existed. That I am real. My story is just one of the thousands of similar stories of the stolen children. Who am I? Where am I from? And for those who were taken as older children, these questions are finding your way home is just as real. Every time a stolen person is returned to their country or returns to their family, it's with great joy and great sorrow. It's with great happiness, and an overwhelming sense of why wasn't I here? And as Rachael said, there is an urgency to this. We're getting old. We're dying. There are less people now than there were ten years ago, 20 years ago. The youngest of us would be in their early 50s and when you look at Aboriginal life expectancy, that's actually quite old for us. And getting older for us. Two such people only recently died. Jack Charles and Archie Roach. Jack and Archie were both stolen children. Both had troubled lives because of their removal. Both spent much of their lives looking for their place in the world, Archie through music and Jack through acting and storytelling. The point of me mentioning them, simply, they were well known. However, most stolen children are not. They are as anonymous to you, they are anonymous to

you and me. And they don't have others to help them. This is where the importance of those who hold information and records is never greater. Accordingly, the responsibility of record management and information holders is simply not to manage documents. It is much more than this. In the case of the stolen children, it is giving people the chance to fill the void of unknowing. The opportunity, for the opportunity of those most affected to find some peace. It's probably one thing I actually look for in my life, is peace. Peace within myself and therefore, peace for others around me, and I think that's true of all the stolen children. It is in this spirit that I am grateful beyond description that the counsel of Australasian Archives and record authorities, state and territory Information Commissioners, privacy commissioners and birth, deaths and marriage registrars have all worked with the Healing Foundations Historical Records Task Force to develop the principles for the nationally, for a nationally consistent approach to accessing stolen generations records. That's a really long way of saying, these people want to help, they want to do the right thing. They recognise that their job is so much more, than just managing an efficient and effective bureaucracy. And I am eternally grateful. I'm really grateful for this group of people to want to work with us to do it. I have my papers, but there are so many who don't. And it actually really matters. It really matters to people beyond just knowing who you are. Proactively supporting access to records for stolen generations people is one of the key actions needed to help healing from trauma of removal. It means for many, as it did for me, that the story of your life is real. That your experience is valid. And that's how you see and understand yourself is no longer brought into question. In essence, it is bringing the truth into light. It also helps us raise a question and this is me adlibbing, the question of redress. Once you know who you are, once it's confirmed who you are in your own mind, the question of redress comes up. I urge and encourage the Queensland Government to establish a redress scheme for the stolen generations. There's only two jurisdictions that don't have it, Western Australia and Queensland. If the Queensland Government wants help doing it, call me. I'm easy to find. I help set up

the Victorian one, I help set up the Commonwealth one. I did the same thing to the Western Australian Minister for Aboriginal Affairs about three weeks ago, so I'm doing it here in Queensland. This cannot wait. This can't be open to political discussion. This must be done and done now. All this, however is at the individual level. What does this mean for the nation? We're in an age where the catch cry of truth telling is often repeated. But what does it really mean and what is its consequence? It's as true for a nation as it is for a person, the older you get, the more things you have in your past that you would rather not talk about, we, we all as people, have regrets. So does sovereign states. Australia is no different from any other sovereign states in its history. We are also no better or no worse. Like people, nations should not sit in judgement of each other's stories. That needs to be left to the peoples of that nation themselves. It is a sign of maturity of a nation, if it can look into the mirror of itself and own what it sees. Australia is at a critical point in its journey. We stand at a fork in the road and must decide which path we take. Are we brave enough to confront the longer, harder, but ultimately more substantial road of disclosure or will we turn away and take the easy road of denial and selective narrative, that tells us only what we want to hear, not what we should and have to hear. It is a choice that, for all of us, for the lack of a better term, have skin in the game with. And it's not a black and white discussion either, for want of another term. And it is a difficult game to play, as there may be no set of rules, at least beyond what we assume, which, which may, which not, which not necessarily may be right anyway. Essentially, to embark on the processes associated with truth telling implies that you are ready to see and hear the things that maybe decidedly uncomfortable, and equally unexpected. A proper truth telling process is not all one way traffic. Let me be clear about that. It's not all one way traffic. Things will emerge that will make everyone, and I mean everyone, reflect and ask is this who we really are? And that is not a bad thing. In fact, it's a decidedly good thing. It is a sign of a maturing nation that we can and are prepared to expose ourselves to the broader story of how our country has evolved to where it is today. What form or forms these processes

take needs to be determined by each jurisdiction. For example, my own state of Victoria has established the (ui) Justice Commission. The Commission has the powers of a Royal Commission, but it's doing it through an Aboriginal process. It's doing something, which carries our culture at its very core. It's more interested in hearing and listening, rather than Royal Commission, how Royal Commissions usually work by extracting information from people and entities. Queensland, as part of its treaty process, may decide on a different but equally valid process. The important part is participation by as many people as possible. Why? Because truth telling is a way of healing. A country, like a person, can be healed by understanding its whole story. The things that make it the way it is, it should not be about attribution of blame. That's easy to do. It's easy to find fault with others, it's easy to point the finger, but it shouldn't be about attribution of blame. But acceptance that we have a wider shared history that we all must own. Make no mistake, we must undertake this. For too long, we have not confronted the unsavoury parts of who Australia is. For too long, we have let the schism between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians widen and rot the bedrock of what should be our national identity. As Abraham Lincoln said, a house divided against itself, cannot stand. The consequence of not looking deeply at ourselves is to contemplate us, as a failed nation. A failed state. Think about that for a minute. If we don't do this, we will have failed as a country. Equally though, we should not let ourselves be bogged down in the past. The point of learning from the broadest sweep of historical and contemporary events, it's important to say contemporary events because we still live this every day. The actions of a senator, one of the senators yesterday in the house, in the senate itself, shows we have a vast, shows we have a long way to go in this country, a very long way to go. It wasn't about an Aboriginal issue. But it just shows that contemporary events play a part of who we are, not just historical ones. And we need to learn from these events, so that we don't repeat the same mistakes again and help complete the blank pages of the book, that is the Australian story. Then, and only then, can we move forward as a people and as a country. And a move forward we

must, for we face many challenges. Climate change, international geopolitics and our place in it, the economy. The place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people in the national narrative, to name a few. And the issues around Aboriginal people are big at the moment. We have the Uluru statement. We have the voice. A potential referendum. And the referendum is more than just a mechanism for Aboriginal view into government about things that affect us. It is so much more than that. This referendum is a referendum on the place of Aboriginal people in our country. If it was just about a mechanism for administrative input into the thinking of government, sure. But it's not. What comes out of that referendum will be, does the rest of the country think that Aboriginal people should be able to speak with their own voice, on their own terms, or not? This is as important as the 1967 referendum, which made us ultimately citizens in our own country. The next part, is do we have a right to be heard as citizens in our own country, on our own terms? I think the people who's supporting this referendum and the people who don't support this referendum, should really contemplate that deeper question and not just the shallow one of, do we need this separate mechanism? Because we don't get a chance to revisit this. Not in my lifetime. I'm nearly 60 years old. I'm Aboriginal. We're not going to do this again for at least one generation. Not that I don't plan on being around if I could be, but you know. There's every chance I won't be so, those who are, those as we go forward, we need to contemplate that deeper question. The point is, we will not be able to meet these challenges until we better us, better understand ourselves and our capacities and our capabilities. And one of those needed attributes is the ability to not only learn and own our own story, but to heal and to forgive, not forget. But to forgive ourselves. And to dedicate our efforts to not only ensuring that we do not relive the past, but that we make a future where everyone feels like they have a place and they belong. Much the same as, the belonging you get from a welcome to country that affords you, the peace that you feel like you have somewhere to belong and that you have a place. And at the end of the day, isn't that all that any of us ask for? Thank you.

RHIANNA	<p>Thank you so much, Ian. We're going to dig into this topic a little bit more now, about those issues around information access, use of records by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. And I'd like to introduce the other two panellists, who'll be joining Ian. Patricia Thompson AM is a descendant of the Kuku Yalanji people of North Queensland. Her parents were born and raised at Cherbourg. Pat is currently the CEO of Linkup Queensland and she comes with a wealth of management experience across all levels of government and importantly at a community level and holds qualifications in management and strategic leadership. Pat has represented Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at a national level as an ATSIC Commissioner, regional counsel chairperson and regional councillor over an eight year period. Pat was also co-chair of the National NAIDOC Committee and a member for almost a decade. And she's currently a member of the State Library of Queensland's Indigenous Advisory Group. Pat comes from a strong social justice background and in January, she was recognised with a member of the Order of Australia for her achievements, contribution and significant service to the Indigenous community. Please make Patricia welcome.</p>
	(applause)
RHIANNA	<p>Our next guest is Rose Barrowcliffe, who is a Butchulla researcher, who examines the representation of Indigenous peoples and archives. Rose has worked with collecting bodies around Australia to assess their representation of Indigenous peoples in their collections. In 2021, Rose was appointed the inaugural First Nations archives adviser to the Queensland State Archives. This appointment coincided with the Queensland Government's path to treaty. Rose's work within QSA is helping to guide, not just internal practise but also various government agencies in how records can be used for Indigenous self determination, during the truth telling and treaty process. Earlier this year, Rose conducted an audit of the contemporary Indigenous collections of State and National libraries of Australia and delivered a report on their representation of Indigenous peoples. In 2021, Rose won the Amanda</p>

	<p>Jones Award for her blog post, which focused on archival practise through the lens of 2020 Black Lives Matter uprising. That blog started conversations across Australia about how archival practise was measuring up against institution statements of intent and reconciliation action plans. Rose continues to work with large collecting institutions and is an active member of the Australian, of the Indigenous Archives Collective, which advocates for Indigenous self determination in archives around the world. Please make Rose welcome.</p>
	<p>(applause)</p>
RHIANNA	<p>We're just going to wait until Mr Soundman has positioned these correctly. Ian, as you've just come off your lecture, I'll start with you because you did talk about how important it was to get your papers, the importance of a birth certificate. And I wonder about that because that really is a privilege for a lot of our mob. And how hard is it to get access to those information and to those records, if you have no identification to start with?</p>
IAN	<p>Yeah, it actually is quite hard because you kind of got to prove who you are before you can get the documents, which show who you are. You know one of those things. And, and you can't, you have to start somewhere. I was lucky in that, I had an advocate in the Victorian Aboriginal Childcare agency, who gave me the steer, what to do. And then Victoria brought in legislation, which made access to those documents quite, you know, easy to do. I was fortunate to be born in a time where that happened. But even though, even then it took months for it to happen and there were some hurdles I had to jump through, now this is in the late 80s. But the same can be true today. The same can be true today. Administrations and sometimes in other parts of government sometimes we, we I say we, I'm still in the habit of doing that. I worked in government for 32 years, so I still fall back in the, we. Sometimes government or people, who work in government think their role is to keep things from people, as opposed to give people access to things. The amount of times I've heard the word privacy kicked around as a reason to not do something or provide information, it's ridiculous.</p>

	<p>When it's not a privacy issue at all. It's just people thinking that that's what they have to do. So for people to get access to their stuff, to have a record and be able to see it, we should be proactively working in that space, not working against it. There's a case, and it's not just, you know, I'll put myself in the category of old people now, but it's not just old people. I read a story last week on ABC online of a 17 year old girl, here in Queensland, who wasn't recorded at birth. Her birth wasn't registered. And she's had the devil's own time getting a birth certificate and her family didn't register it because of that inherited trauma of child removal and other things that happened. So this is now, this isn't just a historical thing, this is one of those contemporary events that I'm talking about as well. So I think that thing of helping people access their information and not, not using artificial blockers is incredibly important and it's a mindset.</p>
<p>RHIANNA</p>	<p>For the purposes of this talk, I'll be referring to Auntie Pat as Auntie Pat because it's too weird for me to call her by her first name, without Auntie Pat in front of it. And I just wanted to recognise that. Plus we also worked out, we might be related through the Islander side of her family. But Auntie Pat, I wanted to know about, you know Linkup is this organisation that directly came out of the, Bringing Them Home report. And for the last eight years, you've been doing this work and I guess, I wanted to get an understanding of, what has been the change that you've seen, in terms of record access and the information that you need to be able to do your work?</p>
<p>PATRICIA THOMPSON</p>	<p>I think I have to say first Rhianna, that Linkup was established before the Bringing Them Home report. And Linkup has been going now for about 38, 39 years. So really important work that's happening, but we work very closely with Kathy Franklin at the Community and Personal Histories. Ruth Lolley is here, who is our research manager and Ruth works closely with Ian on the national task force as well. What changes have occurred? I think there's still a lot of work to be done because of the restriction to access to records, as Ian has expressed in his talk today. But I think, having that national task force work on access is a, is</p>

	<p>a really good thing with the Information Commissioners and others supporting that work, so that it makes it a little bit easier for us to be able to help our stolen generations, people who come through us to access records. Still a long way to go, I think, while we have a good relationship here in Queensland, there are barriers in other states, to us accessing records. There's also barriers here in Queensland, with particular institutions or where there's private collections information for us to access.</p>
RHIANNA	<p>So Aunty Pat is that still one of the biggest, biggest challenges, is just getting access to that information to start with?</p>
PATRICIA	<p>Yeah, it is still a challenge. It's a challenge for all of our people coming forward. There's, there are still restrictions in place that, to restricted records that prevent us from helping some of our clients to obtain their information.</p>
RHIANNA	<p>Give me an idea of kind of what that length of time is, for someone that comes in to Linkup?</p>
PATRICIA	<p>That length of time could vary, we have a case where we have a woman from Queensland, from Cherbourg actually, who went down to Victoria, had a child in Victoria and her child was taken from her, when the child was born. And Ruth, who I've just introduced, has been on this case for a long time and over an 8 year period, trying to access records. One of those was access to a police record, which the police said didn't exist. We had to go to freedom of information to do that, and we're lucky that we've got someone as tenacious as Ruth, in doing her work. We found that the record did exist. We still haven't got closure for that person though. Her child is still lost, and we don't know whether we will ever find that child and bring closure to that case. The same person, we were trying to access records through the hospital, where the child was born, and their response was that, it would take up too much time and resources away from their day to day work to search for that record. So that's the sort of barriers that exist for us. And in that particular case, our stolen generations member is still missing, her mother has not been</p>

	able to find her and she would now be in her early 40s. We don't know whether we'll ever find her.
RHIANNA	Now Aunty Pat, I'm assuming that COVID hasn't helped either?
PATRICIA	COVID has had a huge impact on delaying our research and access to records, for a variety of reasons. In all of the states, of course with working from home and a whole lot of other issues, that have impacted because of COVID, yeah. So we're starting to get a bit of a roll on again, I think with being able to access records again and being able to complete our work. But it certainly put a hold on, or it slowed us up in our work, yeah.
RHIANNA	Rose, when we talk about records and information, I mean I'm keen to get an understanding of what we're talking about, in just your institution, I mean how many are we talking about, in just the Queensland State archives?
ROSE BARROWCLIFFE	Well, it's actually, it's really hard to put a number around, a definitive number around that. And one of the issues with access, is simply that most collecting institutions don't actually know what's in their, their repositories. A lot of these records will have come into the collections, hundreds of years ago in some cases. So they don't have the proper description needed to be able to identify what's there. But having said that, there are certain collections that are used a lot, when reconnecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with their families. And those collections now, we've tried to prioritise at Queensland state archives. I can say that there's been a priority on digitising those, to be able to provide access as much as possible. What I will say is, not specifically around stolen generations records, as an example, we have researchers who have been looking at native police activity and they, that researcher Jonathan Richards has identified 4,000 records just on native police activity. So we have 3.5 million records out at QSA. Only 7% of those have ever been accessed. Only 3% of those have been digitised and yet we, we know that just in, if we look at that as being indicative, that there's a lot more out there that, that we need to uncover

	what's in those records.
RHIANNA	So big disconnect there. And I guess, you know that's obviously one of the challenges, I mean can you talk me through some of the things that you discovered, once you walked into the archives of things like, the way that things are labelled, I mean how hard is it to search through those records, if you are an Aboriginal and Torres Islander person?
ROSE	Yeah, it's really hard. And it's not, it's not just because it's hard to search, it's, you need to learn the language of the archive and it's really intimidating for anyone. I've, you know we've had meetings with history teachers and lawyers, who've said they find archives intimidating you know, this is their area of profession evidence and history. So it, it would be unreasonable to expect that a member of the public, can just come in and navigate these systems really easily. So we, we definitely know that and are aware that those systems need to be made more accessible, for all community members and I'd just like to recognise the amazing work that Linkup and Community and Personal Histories do because they decode a lot of this information and provide access, where QSA and other institutions still have to do that work internally and to be able to make those records accessible.
RHIANNA	And I guess you know, what is the importance of metadata?
ROSE	Huge. It's one of my personal bugbears, which anyone who works with me, can attest to. So I'll give you an example, my traditional country is (ui) Butchulla and I, I happen to be, I asked what's our oldest record in, in, at QSA and it happens to be a map from 1822, I think it is of Butchulla country, which is really exciting to find that. But you know it's not labelled in that way, that I would be able to find it as such. And then one, the other, the other record that was really impactful for me that really drove home the importance of metadata, is a letter book which records all the letters going in and out for the Commissioner of Lands for our country. And I just happened to open up the first page online and in the first page, it has three references to two deaths of Aboriginal people to our ancestors in there. But the only description for that

	<p>letterbook is Letterbook Commission, Commissioner of Lands. But you know on the first page, there's some really important information, so I think we have to do a lot of work to enrich metadata in our collections, to be able to make these records usable, accessible and usable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, trying to reconnect with their families and communities.</p>
RHIANNA	<p>And Rose is it also a case of lack of resources as well, in your area, what gets digitised and is that, it's sort of a little hot tip for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to come to the archives and ask for things because then it will be getting, it will get digitised?</p>
ROSE	<p>Yes, that's probably the archive staff are probably going to kill me for saying that, but yes, I definitely ask, but resourcing is a huge issue. A lot of people I think assume that archivists know everything that's in the collection. That is certainly not the case. So what we, what we really need is researchers because it's actually through people coming in and accessing, accessing those records. That's how we discover in archives what's in those collections and feeding that information back to archive staff, allows us to enrich the metadata, so then we're, we're improving access for everyone to those records.</p>
RHIANNA	<p>Ian, it's interesting listening to both Aunty Pat and Rose because there's obviously a number of different challenges in that, coming from whichever end that you're working with those records. And I guess you know what would a nationally consistent approach to stolen generation records you know, what could that offer?</p>
IAN	<p>A nationally consistent approach would recognise that, a lot of stolen people were moved around the country. In my own state Victoria, we have a lot of people from the Northern Territory, who were taken in the Territory and deposited in Victoria. And I used the term deposited because they were just kind of put there. People moving from Queensland to New South Wales or South Australia to a lot of places, even Western Australians. For people to be able to, particularly if they've grown up in a different state to the one that they're from. And</p>

	<p>they may, you know, the Victorian system is, is, is reasonably accessible. I won't say it's perfect by a long shot, but it's reasonably okay, for somebody who's grown up there to then go to another state, where it's completely not. That just adds to the, to the stress and the issues that people have to deal with. So a nationally consistent approach means we, it means a couple of things. People don't have different, don't have to deal with different systems in different states. It's a consistent one across the country. The other thing, and probably more pertinent, is it recognises this is a national issue. It's not just this state or this territory or that place and not that other place. It happened everywhere. It recognises that we have to own it, as a collective. That's what a national, consistent, consistent approach does too. It also means for those with information, be they, or community service departments, as they were in Victoria at the time, or other departments have got them. It also means for those departments, they can learn from each other. It means for Information Commissioners they can learn from each other and apply advice across the nation and share that. It means, it means for other record holders or archivers, for example. They can have a common approach and grow their wealth of knowledge of how you do this. So everybody's not inventing the wheel, taking up more time, that we quite frankly don't have. That's what a nationally consistent approach can and should do.</p>
RHIANNA	And you're currently got the support coming for that...?
IAN	<p>Yeah, absolutely. From, from the Information Commissioners, from the Privacy Commissioners, birth death and marriage registrars, from archivers, people, from a lot of people who want to develop these national principles and apply them. Now they each have to be applied with, with record holders, beyond those who oversee the record holding system. So that's when you get into the government departments themselves, who have the records, I think that's the next frontier, for want of a better way of putting it, is getting people in government agencies who hold these records, in my own state, it's now called the Department of Human Services. And Ruth, if you want to help me, if you</p>

	want my help trying to navigate the Victorian system, give us a ring, because the newly appointed deputy secretary for Aboriginal outcomes, I think it's called in, in Victoria, I've got her phone number, if you want it? She'll kill me for that. But that's what I mean is, is getting into the government agencies, who hold the records. To them, then rethink about what their job and what their role is, and that makes the flow of records a lot easier.
RHIANNA	I'm going to pick up on that, records and government agencies soon with Rose, but Aunty Pat I wanted to come to you because, you had said that once you get the records, that's only the start of that conversation, what is it about those records, when you get them, that you know when you open that, it might not be the full story?
PATRICIA	Sometimes the records are not accurate. And it goes back to who, you know recorded the information, names and spellings are changed of, in the records. So our researchers have to work through all of that and piece that together to put the story together for our stolen generations, that there were, you know variations to spellings and names, and where people were removed from.
RHIANNA	So for you, you know, this is important that, in going forward that those who look after records, those people that take this information, that there needs to be this level of accuracy, spellings need to be correct. You know, what is your call in that realm of people, who might be listening either here or online, if they're in that line of business?
PATRICIA	That it's important to you, like it's important for our people, it's important for everybody to make sure that, accurate record keeping is maintained, you know, because this information is passed on to future generations. Particularly our stolen generations, you know, having different names, coming from different families and having those different spellings, and trying to work out where they fit and where they belong. So it's really important to make sure that records are kept accurately.
RHIANNA	Rose something that you find in your work as well, about things

	missing?
ROSE	<p>Yeah, I mean I think any, it's exactly for the reasons you've mentioned Aunty Pat, that you know what's in the record or the quality of the record, very much depends on who's created the record. But then when it comes into, well in this, in the case of Queensland State Archives, it's held at the government agency for a number of years, before it comes to Queensland State Archives. So there's all these layers that, that are added onto a record, that can affect its accuracy. Just to go back to your question about resourcing, and that's one of, that's one of the things, having enough staff in organisations like CPH and Linkup, but also in collecting agencies and having Indigenous staff is really, really important to ensure things like accuracy and proper description, and understanding of records as well. And being able to update them and know that it's, it's the information is correct and accurate but also culturally appropriate. You know, these sorts of things, this is really important work that needs to be done, that can't be done without actually creating positions to do that within these organisations.</p>
RHIANNA	<p>Rose, what is, you know, I guess something that government departments that hold records that have collections like this, of information, things that they should be thinking about you know, and things that you think about in your day to day work?</p>
ROSE	<p>I mean there's, there's a lot of things. Again I will go back to one of the, the simplest things. It sounds simple, but it's not simple at all, of course, is having Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people involved in the process, all the way along. And then implementing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander world views within systems, so as we talked about, metadata is really important, so having Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, involved in deciding how records are, are described and appraised, and collected is really, really important.</p>
RHIANNA	<p>So I guess that comes down to also, it's something that, I mean I'm not an archivist. I did have one, a share house friend once who was an archivist and I learnt quite a lot from her. But when, when we are talking</p>

	<p>about this taking down of information and this taking down of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and lives and connections, I have always wondered, would we take down if we were in charge of our own information, would we take down different things that, maybe is not what non-Indigenous people collecting that information would think about, for instance that would be valuable for us?</p>
ROSE	<p>Yeah, absolutely. And in my, my doctoral research, that's exactly what I found. I've researched an archive based on my traditional country and you know the, the non-Indigenous staff that looked after that archive, they just weren't seeing the same things that my Butchulla elders were seeing, in those records. They didn't recognise the names of our ancestors or even places that were important. Or certainly in the case of people, who've been removed from families, they might not know that history of certain places or, or certain events that resulted in removals. So to be able to accurately do archival work but also interpret archival records, you need to be, somewhat of a subject matter expert. And there's no better subject matter experts, on their own history, than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</p>
RHIANNA	<p>And Ian, am I right in that part of what the Historical Records Task Force has been looking at, as part of this nationally consistent approach is also about, a body that would be the go to for all records in Australia as well?</p>
IAN	<p>In terms of Indigenous records?</p>
RHIANNA	<p>Yeah.</p>
IAN	<p>Perhaps not a particular body, but certainly a well co-ordinated single system that operates, that was, that's the most important part cause setting up another body, would that actually achieve something or would that be another thing in its own right? The important part though, your points right, a single, whether it's a body, but a single system that works, so a person can enter it and they don't have to enter it again somewhere else and retell their story and reinvent it the whole time. That, that is probably the most important thing, out of the work of the</p>

	<p>records task force is that, we don't want to create another layer of bureaucracy. We want to work with the bureaucracies that exist and make them work better, make them work more purposefully and make them work, make them work in a way, that doesn't have a negative impact on ordinary people trying to access them, access them. That's, that's the most critical thing that we want.</p>
RHIANNA	<p>Aunty Pat would that make your job easier?</p>
PATRICIA	<p>It certainly would. There are institutions, where records have been closed off now. And are only for our stolen generations and are only open to those individuals, who are now seeking redress through the National Redress Scheme. So it certainly makes our job a lot harder and, you know, brings that trauma back to those people, who are trying to access their records, particularly church records. And Linkup through our research manager Ruth, has been doing a lot of work in terms of, you know, making contact and writing to those institutions to open up their records for our stolen generations people.</p>
RHIANNA	<p>Rose, I feel like there's a lot of intersections that overlap here as well, in terms of whether that's the Act, whether it's jurisdictions, whether it's the way that different institutions hold different information. And I wonder about the Tandanya Declaration, what it is, also what is, what its impact will be on archives, but then how does that intersect with things like UNDRIP and then, Indigenous data sovereignty, for instance?</p>
ROSE	<p>Yeah, so the Tandanya Declaration came about in 2019, and really the simplest explanation is that, it's applying UNDRIP and the, the rights in UNDRIP, in an archival setting. So all throughout UNDRIP there is references to Indigenous people being able to control, maintain and, and really be decision makers, about their own information and cultures and representations of that. So the Tandanya Declaration was put together by an international group of Indigenous archivists. And it was applying the most pertinent parts of UNDRIP to archival practise. So quite a few Australian collecting institutions have now ratified or adopted the Tandanya Declaration. QSA has, I believe Vicky State Library</p>

	<p>supports UNDRIP as well. So really, it's like most of these declarations, it's not something that's legally binding or, but it does guide the decision making internally. So for example at Queensland State archives, that resulted in them looking at what they were doing and they came up with the statement of intent to say yes, we support the Tandanya Declaration. My appointment there as the First Nations Archives advisor has been part of a response to that. And how do we change internal practise to support these articles within UNDRIP about Indigenous people being able to manage, control and decide about their own information and data.</p>
<p>RHIANNA</p>	<p>Ian, you talked a lot about our truth telling and the importance of truth telling and where we're heading with truth telling at the moment. And particularly in this state, as we move towards treaty in that place of truth telling. And I guess for you what, what is it about that narrative in truth telling, you hinted to it in your lecture, but what is it that you really want, particularly non-Indigenous people to understand, about that process of truth telling?</p>
<p>IAN</p>	<p>The really important thing to understand about the truth telling process, it is at first look, people think, it's going to be this deluge of unsavoury things, do we really want to hear it? That's the first thing. And that's the point of it. It will be things that will be uncomfortable, that will cause us to, as I said in when I spoke, look in the mirror and say, is that who we really are? That's what's going to happen. But the importance of it is, we need to do that. We need to own our own story. Our country's just stuck at the moment in this, in almost this, this duplicitous situation of, it just doesn't know should move forward. It can't move forward, it can. Which way should we go? This isn't about attribution of blame. This isn't about finger pointing. Truth telling is about us being big enough to say, you got to own all this history. The good, the bad, the ugly. That's what it is about. And when you can do that, means you're grown up enough as a country. Means you're grown up, you can wear big boy pants now and behave on the world stage with a bit of respect, where people aren't looking at you saying Australia, you know, still haven't come to terms</p>

	<p>with its own past. It's a bit like Australia Day. People want to move Australia today. A to what? But B, I'm actually quite comfortable with Australia Day being on the 26th of January. Why? Because it makes us look in the mirror every year. It makes us look at the truth of who we are. We have much to be proud of. We have much to reflect on. That's what truth telling does and Australia Day makes us, it forces us to do it, every year. Rather than shifting to some unknown date, where we get all shallow and jingoistic again. So I'm quite comfortable with that, even if it makes us uncomfortable. And that's what truth telling does. It makes us a better, it makes us a better country, makes us better people.</p>
PR	<p>Is it also about, that it's not just about one narrative taking over from another, another narrative?</p>
IAN	<p>It is, that's exactly right. There was, there was some, there was some stuff in Melbourne last week, around the AFLW and the death of the Queen and whether there should be, and it happened to be the Indigenous round, whether there should be a minute silence for the Queen, during the Indigenous round. It got, it all got a bit caught up in footy stuff. But one person spoke about, it depends which version of history you subscribed to. And I thought to myself, it's not which version of history you subscribe to, it's what you add with the different views of history to give you a bigger one. So you're right, it's not replacing one narrative with another, it's adding to those narratives to make the bigger picture. Because if you simply replace one narrative with another, that makes you know better than the people you're angry at in the first place. What you have to do is, add to the whole narrative. What you have to do is, say there are different viewpoints of the same events. There are different effects of those events, where one lot, where one narrative is people went forth and settled Australia equally. There were people already there who were displaced. You need to have both views of that. You need to say, we own all of that, the good, the bad, the ugly. That's how this should work.</p>
RHIANNA	<p>Aunty Pat, I feel like Linkup is being truth telling for a very long time now. And I guess when you think of truth telling, I mean, how does that</p>

	work in your line of work and where do you think that truth telling is going?
PATRICIA	I think that our people stories are really important and I think that we do a really good job in sharing our people's stories and that's what's really important, so that people understand from individuals, from hearing their stories, the hurt that, and the trauma that still exists for them. The, the intergenerational and the transgenerational trauma that is still there. That truth telling is really important. I think through our work, through our magazines and our websites, we're able to articulate individual's personal stories. We also have events like, the apology event, which we still hold every year in our Sorry Day event, where we have stolen generations people tell their stories. And I think that that is the most powerful in terms of, truth telling it. You're hearing it directly from individuals, who have been removed and who have suffered and continue to suffer. And that suffering is passed onto you know, the younger generation, so. That's really important, I think.
RHIANNA	Aunty Pat, do you think there needs to be a definitive definition of truth telling, as we take this journey?
PATRICIA	Oh, I'm not sure. I'm not sure that I can respond to that. I think everybody's, everybody's journey, everybody's story is really important. People have different stories to tell. People have different experiences. I'm not sure whether you can kind of define that.
RHIANNA	Rose, State Archive's very aware of the truth telling journey. A lot of the work that you're doing at the moment is directly related, to a lot of that. And so I guess, can you tell me some of that work that the Queensland State Archives has been doing, as this journey begins?
ROSE	Yeah. So I already mentioned, the first wars project that's been running there, that has been led by researcher historian Jonathan Richards, to find and bring together the records that relate to native police activity. So that research has been used in the documentary series that I mentioned, the Australian Wars series that Rachel Perkins has on TV.

	So the second episode of that is out tonight.
RHIANNA	Tonight 8:30. Not a plug.
ROSE	And then the final screen, the final series episode of that is October 5th, which specifically focuses on Queensland's history. So that's a really powerful one as well. So yeah, we're trying to identify and working to identify any records that can be, in service of truth telling. And there's other work being done as well, like I think has, was identified by the Treaty Working Group in their community engagement process, was that community members saying, you know, truth telling can't just come from mob, it can't just come from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. And that's one of the great things about Rachael's documentary series is, she has a large number of historians, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous in there, but she also has some descendants from people who were non-Indigenous, people who were involved in massacres. So as Aunty Pat is saying there's, there's, everyone's story counts. So we're also supporting that work at QSA, in terms of government agencies also knowing their part in that history and what they need to own as part of truth telling as well.
RHIANNA	Aunty Pat, I might come to you for the last word, and I wanted to you know, Ian's touched on it, Rose has touched on it, but I guess, you know, this work is so important and time is really of the essence. Can you talk to me about the importance of time and what that means to the people that you work with?
PATRICIA	I think the important work that the task force at the national level is doing, the Healing Foundation is doing, and trying to break down those barriers, in terms of being able to access records is really important. And there needs to be some real timeliness around that, not the barriers that are put up from us, being able to access those records. So I hope that, you know the work that Ian, Ruth and others are doing at that national level, really breaks down those barriers, so that we can access our records in a more timely manner, so that the people that we work with, we're able to provide them with information that they require to, still

	<p>bring them home effectively, because that's what Linkup does. I mean, we've been bringing people home for a long time and we continue to do that. And if we can do that in a much more timely way, I think that that would be great for our mob.</p>
RHIANNA	<p>On that note, can you please put your hands together for Ian and Patricia and Rose. I'd like to thank you for all attending today, to also those that joined us online, for attending the 2022 Solomon Lecture. Enjoy the rest of your day.</p>