

Pain of separation recalled

Stolen Generation victims to discuss experiences to mark anniversary

Barry Kennedy

THE displacement, loss of community and search for connection felt by the indigenous members of the Stolen Generation will be discussed in Sunbury tonight.

The event, to be presented by the newly formed Sunbury Aboriginal Corporation in partnership with Sunbury Community Health and the Healing Foundation, will feature two elders who were taken from their families and communities.

The discussion is timed to mark the 20th anniversary of the influential *Bringing them Home* report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families.

Woodend resident Gene Roberts said he and four siblings were taken from his family, which lived at Kangaroo Ground, in 1961. He was just four at the time.

"I was fostered out, as being fair-skinned, I was seen as suitable for assimilation," he said.

Mr Roberts described his experience as a foster child as "a life of servitude".

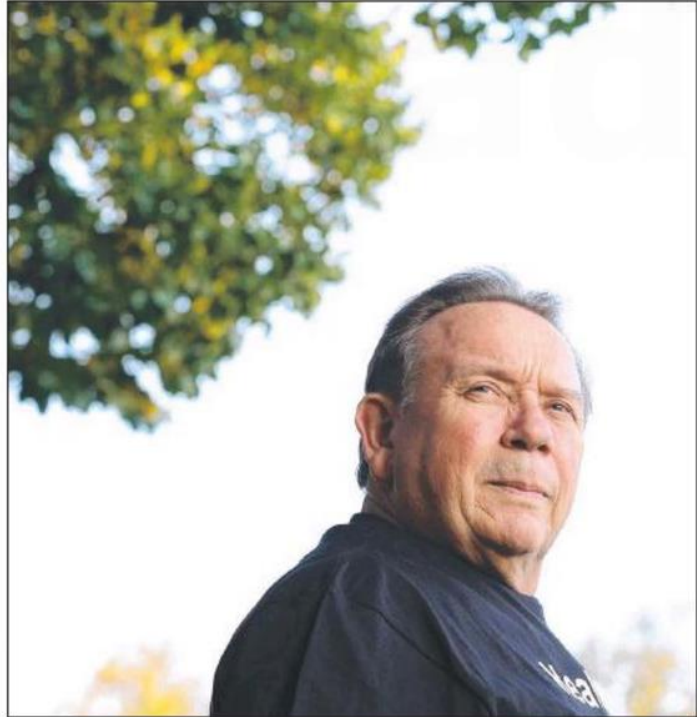
Mr Roberts has become a scholar of Aboriginal culture in adulthood, bridging some of the gaps in his history, and has met his siblings and parents again.

But by the time he found his mother, she had weeks to live and in her frailness did not recall him, while he met his father in Queensland a year before he too died.

Mr Roberts said his immediate family was scattered across the state, although he discovered later an older sister's foster family was 1km from his own.

"The Stolen Generation was designed to break up families and the history that goes with it," he said. "I do know I am Jarra Jarra from my mother's side and Walraka in Northern Territory and Queensland from Dad."

Tonight's event is at Sunbury Community Health, 6-7.30pm. Details: Gail 9744 4455



Gene Roberts will speak in Sunbury tonight about his experiences. Picture: MARK WILSON