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‘Sorry Books’ at AIATSIS detail apologies already made

With Australian political leaders preparing to make a national apology for past wrongs inflicted on Aboriginal people, many hundreds of thousands of Australians have already signed Sorry Books.

A collection of 461 Sorry Books are held at the Library in AIATSIS (The Australian Institute of Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander Studies) in Canberra and their significance has been recognised by their inscription on the Australian Memory of the World Register in 2004. This inscription is the documentary equivalent of World Heritage listing.

The collection of Sorry Books has powerful historical and social significance as the personal responses of hundreds of thousands of Australians to the unfolding history of the Stolen Generations. Many more Sorry Books dating from the 1998 campaign are yet to be located, but it is estimated that the entire movement generated perhaps half a million signatures. This represents a ‘people’s apology’ for past wrongs to Indigenous Australians. The AIATSIS Library would be happy to add more of the missing *Sorry Books* to its collection. Please contact the Library on library@aiatsis.gov.au or 02 62461182

Various volumes of the *Sorry Books* are on display in the AIATSIS Library and selected messages can be read in an AIATSIS online exhibition at

http://www1.aiatsis.gov.au/exhibitions/sorrybooks/sorrybooks_hm.htm

As Jan Lyall, Chair of the UNESCO Memory of the World Australian committee, states: “These Sorry Books are the Australian people’s apology. They date from the 1998 campaign for government leadership in acknowledging Australia’s historical treatment of Aboriginal people. These books contain statements of sorrow from people across the country”

UNESCO's Third international *Memory of the World Conference: Communities and memories - A Global Perspective* (18-22 Feb at the National Library of Australia Canberra) will feature the announcement of new additions to the Australia Register and for the first time, items for the Regional Asia Pacific Register.

[Conference website www.amw.org.au/mow2008/mow2008.htm](http://www.amw.org.au/mow2008/mow2008.htm)

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