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Witness to historic moment

Ian Kirkwood

LIKE many Aboriginal Australians, "Uncle" Paul Gordon looks older than his 48 years.

As Yarnteen College chief executive in Newcastle West, Mr Gordon deals day in, day out, with the best and worst that life has to offer indigenous Australians.

Mr Gordon arrived in Canberra yesterday morning as part of a group of about 100 Aboriginal people from the Hunter Valley, including a busload of more than 50 who drove down yesterday as part of a contingent from the Awabakal Aboriginal Co-op.

He was born in Brewarrina, on the Barwon River east of Bourke, and moved to Newcastle for work when he was 19. His father was "darker than mum", whose "father was a white fella".

To him, today's apology has the potential to become one of the most important days in Australian history.

"Kevin Rudd saying sorry should be one of those great moments, like Gough Whitlam pouring sand through the hands of Vincent Lingiari," Mr Gordon said about the 1975 return of the Wave Hill cattle station in the Northern Territory to its traditional owners the Gurindji.

Mr Gordon says he knows today's apology is controversial for all sorts of reasons, among indigenous and non-indigenous Australians alike.

"Some of our people are asking why the apology is only to the stolen generations and not to all Aborigines for everything that has been done since white man came," he said.

"They still haven't admitted that they stole our land. We could become a great nation, but we can't be a great nation while ever our history is built on lies. This country has to tell the truth."

Source: The Herald, NSW



TRUTH: Paul Gordon travelled to Canberra yesterday.- Picture by Peter Stoop