



Our Healing Our Way

Newsletter of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation

May 2016

CEO's message

Welcome to the May edition of *Our Healing Our Way*.

In this edition we highlight the development of healing centres in Broome and Yarrabah near Cairns, new videos telling the stories of five Kimberley Stolen Generations members and last month's national Link-Up meeting.

We also update you on the inaugural Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Conference, held in Alice Springs earlier this month.

The coming weeks and months offer plenty of opportunities to celebrate our culture, identity, families and communities.

The 2016 National Families Week (15-21 May) theme is "Stronger Families, Stronger Communities"; this year's National Reconciliation Week (27 May – 3 June) theme is "Our History, Our Story, Our Future" and the 2016 NAIDOC Week (3-10 July) theme is "Songlines: the living narrative of our nation".

This National Sorry Day, 26 May, marks 19 years since the *Bringing them Home* report was tabled in Federal Parliament and Mabo Day, 3 June, marks 24 years since the High Court overturned the untruth of terra nullius in 1992.

We're gearing up for another busy couple of months here at the Healing Foundation. Watch this space and **follow us on Facebook** for more details!

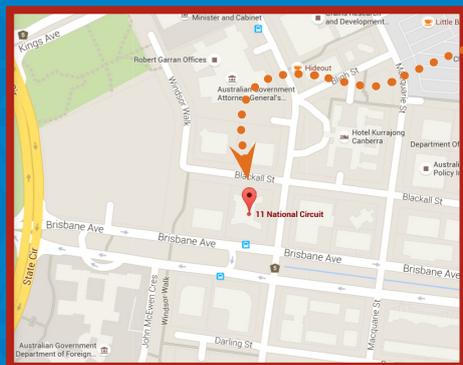
Our Canberra office has moved – please check out our new contact details below.



Richard Weston
CEO



We've moved



Our new Canberra office is located at Unit 11, Level 2, 11 National Circuit Barton and our new phone number is 02 6272 7500.

Importantly our postal address remains the same: PO Box 4363 Kingston ACT 2604



Link-Up national meeting, Broome

The Healing Foundation attended last month's national Link-Up meeting to present on our work and progress the conversation about how we can work more closely together.

The national Link-Up leadership group meets face to face twice a year in various regional locations to discuss the reunification and healing services they provide to Stolen Generations communities, communication with government and other strategic priorities.

Discussions at last month's meeting ranged from the value of collective healing for Link-Up clients and the importance of addressing intergenerational trauma to next year's 20th anniversary of the *Bringing them Home* report.

"Link-Up organisations around the country play a crucial role in helping our people reconnect with family, community, land and culture" Healing Foundation CEO Richard Weston said.

"This reconnection is often the first step towards healing the trauma of forced removal for Stolen Generations members and their descendants."



National Link-Up meeting Broome

Broome healing centre receives a \$3 million boost

In April Healing Foundation CEO Richard Weston visited Nyamba Buru Yawuru (NBY) in Broome to discuss the development of their healing centre, Liyan-ngan Nyirrwa.

"Liyan" is a Yawuru word used to talk about wellbeing or strong spirit. The Yawuru people know that if your liyan isn't strong, you will struggle.

The healing centre will provide a place for people of all ages to go, a place to help address community trauma and preserve Yawuru language and culture. It will be open to all Aboriginal people living in Broome and neighbouring communities.

"Liyan-ngan Nyirrwa will play an important role in healing the local community."



ABOVE: An artist's impression of the healing centre

"Like many communities across Australia, the Yawuru people were deeply impacted by the Stolen Generations policies and recognise the intergenerational trauma that has arisen as a result of these experiences," Richard Weston said.

Nyamba Buru Yawuru recently received a \$3 million Lotterywest grant towards the construction and fit out of the \$8 million facility.

Richard Weston met with NBY Chairperson Debra Pigram, senior Yawuru woman Dianne Appleby and three NBY staff to discuss how the Healing Foundation could further support their work.

The Healing Foundation supported the initial development of the healing centre, including stakeholder engagement and business case modelling.

NBY is currently focusing on strategies to secure the additional funding required to build and run the healing centre and developing the service model for the centre. Liyan-ngan Nyirrwa is expected to be operational within two years.

Caring for the carers in Yarrabah

Gurriny Yealamucka Health Service (GYHS) in Yarrabah, Far North Queensland recently participated in a series of trauma and healing workshops as part of the early development of their community healing centre.

Over five days Victorian consultant Karen Milward worked with GYHS staff and board members on how they could become a more trauma informed, healing aware service and the benefits this would have.

“The sessions increased our understanding of healing and trauma, as well as topics like cultural loads, lateral violence and cultural safety in an organisational context” GYHS Business Development Planning & Research Manager Ruth Fagan said.

“We learnt about the impacts of trauma including how it can affect the way patients manage their health.”

“It was a real honour to work with wonderful people who have the insight to want to try a different

approach to looking after the health and wellbeing of board, management and staff as individuals, employees and community members” Karen Milward said. GYHS plans to open future workshops to other local organisations so their staff can also learn about trauma informed service delivery and how to care for the carers.

The Yarrabah community first recognised the importance of healing more than 20 years ago, understanding that people’s physical health would not improve until they were able to heal from the trauma of the Stolen Generations.

The Yarrabah community healing centre will blend traditional and contemporary healing methods to diagnose and treat mental health issues, support the community’s young people and improve family resilience.

The healing centre is currently in the planning and development phase. With a possible site design completed, acquiring adequate funds is the project team’s main priority.



Close the Gap Day

The Healing Foundation marked Close the Gap Day 2016 by drawing attention to the link between improving Indigenous mental health and social and emotional wellbeing and health, education and employment rates.

“Investment in trauma informed, healing responses has been the missing piece in the ten year strategy to Close the Gap so far,” Healing Foundation CEO Richard Weston said in a media statement. “We cannot expect people to achieve their potential if they are grappling with the debilitating effects of trauma.”

The Healing Foundation called for trauma informed and culturally appropriate services, community healing strategies and opportunities to come together for group healing to be urgently implemented across every state and territory.



Kimberley Stolen Generations stories captured on film

The Kimberley Stolen Generation Aboriginal Corporation (KSGAC) has produced a series of powerful videos telling the stories of five elderly Stolen Generations members.

The oral histories were recorded at a KSGAC gathering in Wuggubun in the East Kimberley region of Western Australia last year.

KSGAC CEO Ken Riddiford said it is extremely difficult for many Stolen Generations members to voice their stories on film but doing so allows a natural healing process to take place.

“Reliving this history reminds Stolen Generations members of the importance of connecting or reconnecting with the family and country they were removed from and re-learning language” Ken Riddiford said.

“These stories must be captured now to ensure they can be handed down to future generations and not forgotten or lost.”

“Through this project the stories of these Elders will live on forever in film.”

Wuggubun was chosen as the location for the gathering due to its significance to local Stolen Generations members and many Kitja people. “Everyone feels a bit at home there,” Ken Riddiford said.

“We’d like to share that story now with people so they can know what happened to us ... because who else is gonna tell them?”

“Going to Wuggubun, it was a healing thing for all of us ... all together, together, together, have a chat and laugh and talk about the past”

“When you meet up with these old people then you feel somehow like you’ve been healed and you feel better”

“It’s good to bring the emotions out when you’re with friends instead of with somebody else that don’t even know you”

WARNING: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are warned that the following photo may contain images of deceased persons



KSGAC gathering in Wuggubun

Private sessions with the Child Abuse Commission

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse provides survivors with an opportunity to share their stories in person with a Commissioner. More than 5,000 sessions have been held so far.

Registration for the private sessions closes on 30 September 2016.

For more information go to www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/share-your-story/private-sessions phone 1800 099 340 or email contact@childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Conference

In early May people from around Australia came together in Alice Springs for the first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide prevention conference.

The conference was led by Professor Pat Dudgeon, psychologist and Project Director of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project, and Tom Calma, Co-Chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Advisory Group.

Healing Foundation CEO Richard Weston and representatives from other relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations also contributed to the organisation of the conference.

In his keynote address to the conference, Stan Grant said Indigenous suicide is an Australian problem, not an Indigenous problem.

Conference participants talked about

- the need to support community members to prevent and respond to social and emotional wellbeing issues
- supporting the creation of healing centres to provide social and emotional wellbeing services
- valuing traditional healing approaches
- traditional and western methodologies coming together, in the same way western trained Indigenous counsellors worked alongside traditional healing methods at the conference, including bush medicine and traditional healers
- the importance of healing and connection to culture
- the need for services capable of working alongside and empowering community members
- the need for governments to appropriately fund and support community led strategies
- the need to build and support a healing workforce

Dr Helen Milroy, psychiatrist and Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse Commissioner said preventing and healing child sexual abuse was critical to reducing youth suicide.

Suicide is one of many issues our communities are grappling with. It is a symptom of trauma and cannot be addressed in isolation.

“We need to better support our communities to develop local and regional solutions to the trauma and distress in people’s lives, before they reach crisis point” Healing Foundation CEO Richard Weston said.

“Western frameworks of mental health focus primarily on individual issues and symptoms management rather than providing a holistic approach that encompasses people’s circumstances, culture and history.”



A conference report including recommendations will be available on the ATSIPEP website soon:
www.atsispep.sis.uwa.edu.au/natsispc-2016

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Opening ceremony; smoking ceremony; Ngangkari Healing Group presenting

If you are depressed or contemplating suicide, help is available at Lifeline on **131 114** or online. Alternatively you can call the **Suicide Call Back Service** on **1300 659 467**. For young people 5-25 years, call **Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800**. For resources on Indigenous social and emotional wellbeing and mental health services see www.sewbmh.org.au