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## **Healing the Stolen Generations and families will help Close the Gap**

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As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia commemorate the seventh anniversary of the national Apology to members of the Stolen Generations the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation has urged Governments to take further action to support national healing.

Healing Foundation CEO said the PM's recent Close the Gap report card, detailing disappointing progress on closing education and health gaps demonstrated the importance of healing the tens of thousands of Aboriginal people who have been impacted by the policies of child removal.

"Nearly 50% of all Aboriginal people have been directly impacted by these nefarious policies and report higher levels of poor health and psychological distress than other Indigenous people," said Richard Weston. "The Stolen Generations and their families are also more likely to have been charged with a criminal offence, more likely to have substance misuse and gambling problems and more likely to suffer from poor mental health.

"The Apology was very welcome but the suffering and destruction of lives continues as the trauma of forced separation is passed down to following generations and in a particularly terrible irony is likely to be partly responsible for the continuation of children being removed today.

"Governments must implement the key recommendations from the Bringing Them Home report."

Richard Weston said these recommendations included adequate funding for specialist Aboriginal mental health and family reunion services, national legislation to ensure removal of Aboriginal children is a last resort and reparation for the survivors of forced removals.

"These recommendations are critical to the ongoing healing of our people and arguably to the success of health, economic and social equity aimed at by the Close the Gap strategy."

The Healing Foundation is assisting more than 80 community events happening today to commemorate the Apology and bring members of the Stolen Generations together.

In Port Adelaide hundreds are expected to attend a "Walk of Awareness"; at the Hunter River High School in NSW students and members of the local Aboriginal community are participating in a smoking ceremony; in Lismore local healing group, Rekindling the Spirit is hosting a memorial garden planting and cultural activities and in Cairns the Wuchopperen Health Service is hosting a morning tea for community members.

"There are many positive community initiatives taking place today which will support our Stolen Generations members and work to actively heal the wounds still so painful to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families," said Richard Weston.

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