

Calls for urgent action to make ‘sorry’ real on Apology anniversary

On the ninth anniversary of the Apology, the Healing Foundation is calling for urgent action to address the widespread crisis in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The National Apology to the Stolen Generations was just one of 54 comprehensive recommendations made in the 1997 *Bringing them Home* report to address the impact of forced removal on the Stolen Generations and their descendants. Most have not yet been implemented.

The report highlighted that many of the issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (including substance abuse, mental illness and family violence) are strongly associated with the forced removal of children and the subsequent failure to provide healing.

“The Apology provided an important acknowledgement of the harm that was done, but practical measures are urgently required – especially to meet the needs of ageing Stolen Generations members within their lifetimes,” Healing Foundation CEO Richard Weston said.

“Many of the people who bared their souls to the inquiry in the hope of change have already passed away. Those who are left are getting old, often living in poverty due to being denied education and other opportunities as children, and facing new challenges including in relation to aged care.

“Failure to act has also created a ripple effect to current generations. Incarceration and suicide rates, substance abuse, mental health issues and family violence are all linked to unresolved trauma.

“The level of trauma our communities are experiencing is not surprising when you consider babies and children were taken from their homes or on their way to school, often never to see their families again. Communities were destroyed and in many cases have not yet been able to heal.”

Between now and the 20th anniversary of the *Bringing them Home* report on 26 May 2017 the Healing Foundation will be raising awareness of the outstanding needs of Stolen Generations members and their descendants through a new project called Heal Our Past, Build Our Future, BTH20.

As part of this project, the Healing Foundation is today announcing a series of grants to enable communities, Indigenous organisations and schools in each state and territory to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the report and celebrate their local Stolen Generations members.

“Commemorative events are an important part of the healing process for Stolen Generations members and a key part of the Healing Foundation’s work,” Mr Weston said.

Grant applications open today and close on Friday 24 February. To apply or find out more, visit www.healingfoundation.org.au

The Healing Foundation is a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation that partners with communities to address the ongoing trauma caused by actions like the forced removal of children from their families. Our work helps people create a different future.

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