

National strategy key to reducing trauma and kids in care

The Healing Foundation supports Commissioner Gooda's call for a national strategy to address the trauma affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities if we are to reduce the number of Indigenous children in the child protection system.

The call is contained in the *Social Justice and Native Title Report 2015*, to be launched in Sydney today.

"The report recognises the impact of intergenerational trauma on our communities and the need for healing and trauma informed approaches to address the alarming rates of Indigenous kids in out of home care," Healing Foundation CEO Richard Weston said.

The report describes healing as 'a critical issue facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families within the context of child protection' (p. 168). It also states that 'understanding the links between trauma, social disadvantage and child abuse and neglect are critical to breaking the cycle that brings Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children into contact with child protection authorities' (p. 165).

"As a country, we cannot shy away from the fact that the trauma caused by policies such as the forced removal of children from their families and communities, as well as colonisation more broadly, continue to devastate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities," Mr Weston said.

"Our partnership with the Murri School in Brisbane, showcased in this report, demonstrates how trauma informed approaches can assist children in the child protection system.

Through both cultural and therapeutic activities, the program is strengthening students' social and emotional wellbeing, helping to improve family relationships and increasing classroom engagement.

"The report also recognises the importance of self-determination in addressing the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in out of home care," Mr Weston said.

"The Healing Foundation works directly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, women and children around the country to empower them to lead the way in their own healing.

"This ensures community ownership and a continued commitment to local needs and solutions, culture and knowledge systems.

"We know working with communities to address trauma and enable healing is key to reducing the number of Indigenous kids in care. It's time for a coordinated state and territory approach to this critical issue," Mr Weston said.

Recommendation 21 of the *Social Justice and Native Title Report 2015* is that "The Australian Government supports long-term investment in healing initiatives including services, research and evaluation".

The Healing Foundation is a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation with a focus on building culturally strong, community led healing solutions. More information is available at www.healingfoundation.org.au

Media contact: Shivaun Inglis, 0451 148 380