

## **Culture is the way forward for keeping kids out of care**

The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care could be reduced by heeding Indigenous knowledges, an international conference in Darwin will be told today.

In his address to the Third International Indigenous Social Work Conference, Healing Foundation Chair Professor Steve Larkin will say that more needs to be done to reconnect Indigenous Australians with cultural ways of healing trauma and loss.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people developed extraordinary social and community skills over thousands of years of living harmoniously in this land,” Professor Larkin said.

“These values and principles, which contained important lessons and fundamental wisdom, were displaced by colonisation, but not lost and now need to be reinstated.

“Reconnecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with our core cultural value systems, as the Healing Foundation is doing around the country, enables us to tap into this knowledge to find solutions to problems and create change.

“Our programs are testament to the fact that when our knowledge is harnessed, trusted and enabled, sustainable change can be created within short time periods,” Professor Larkin said.

In five short years the Healing Foundation has provided funding to over 100 community organisations to lead and develop healing projects and assisted more than 20,000 Indigenous community members to be supported on a healing journey.

“We need to listen to and be guided by our evidence in addressing the growing over representation of Indigenous children in the child protection system, which is one of our nation’s greatest challenges,” Professor Larkin said.

“This evidence says that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families need to be supported to heal by our knowledge and by our people through our services.

“At all levels we must empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, elevate the status of our ways of knowing and challenge the maintenance of the status quo that prevents this.”

*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](http://www.healingfoundation.org.au)*

**Media contact: Raina Hunter, 0407 120 401**