

## Shining QLD example of Closing the Gap to be rolled out interstate

A new approach to Closing the Gap has been so successful at a Brisbane school that it is now being rolled out within the NSW State school system.

Developed jointly by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation and Brisbane's Murri School four years ago, the program brings together family support workers, psychologists, medical and allied health professionals and trauma-informed teachers to create a culturally appropriate, supportive environment.

Supported by a whole of school approach to trauma, the program is designed for Indigenous children and young people who have experienced issues like trauma, grief and loss, cultural dislocation, family strain, disrupted parenting and social disadvantage, including those who have had contact with the Department of Child Safety and the youth justice system.

Already, the program has resulted in:

- improved classroom retention and educational outcomes for students
- improved social and emotional wellbeing for students, and
- increased numbers of parents seeking support early

Throughout the project, 70% of participating students have reported improvements in their ability to manage difficult situations at home and at school, 80% have reported increased help-seeking behaviours at home and at school, and 90% say they have a stronger connection with their families.

“The success of this program underlines the importance of healing to Closing the Gap,” Mr Weston said.

“It addresses the intergenerational trauma experienced by so many Indigenous children and young people by creating a safe environment where students feel comfortable seeking support, and adopting a trauma-informed, holistic approach.

“The program has also been building strong relationships with students’ families, including through family camps. This has resulted in more parents referring their children for support, and more families engaging with the school due to positive word of mouth.”

These elements of the program are now being implemented within the NSW State school system, at Bourke High School and Brewarrina Central School.

**Murri School staff and Healing Foundation CEO Richard Weston are available for interview. The Murri School dance group will perform at 10am today at the Murri School's Family Support Room, 1277 Beaudesert Road, Acacia Ridge QLD.**

*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, 0402 145 820**