

## Participation and personal responsibility alone are not the answer

Healing the trauma affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities will not occur through participation and personal responsibility alone, according to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation.

“Trauma and the impact of trauma are very complex issues. The depth of grief and loss and despair that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are carrying is not well understood in our society,” Healing Foundation Board member Professor Steve Larkin said.

Healing takes time, and requires access to culturally appropriate support. It also requires the creation of an environment for healing at a community and policy level, strong mental health policy with healing at its core, and an effective social and emotional support system.

Numerous reports have shown that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not accessing existing mental health services because the support provided is not culturally competent or appropriate<sup>1</sup>.

“Participation is critical to healing, but recovery is not possible without appropriate support. If people are overwhelmed with their distress and have poor social and emotional wellbeing they won’t be able to gain control over their lives,” Professor Larkin said.

“Healing is central to people being able to avail themselves of employment, education and leadership.

“Healing is not a destination. People will need to have a response that continues to repair and restore them for the rest of their lives, and some will need more support than others.”

*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**

---

<sup>1</sup> Report of the National Review of Mental Health Programmes and Services (2014); Living Well: A strategic Plan for Mental Health in NSW 2014 - 2024