

Young leaders to advise on Indigenous healing

A new youth-led initiative will support young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to make a difference in their communities and achieve healing.

The Young Healers program, to be launched in Perth on 3 September, will work with young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people around the country to address intergenerational trauma affecting many Indigenous youth.

The new program is an initiative of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation which was formed on the first anniversary of the Apology to the Stolen Generations and supports culturally strong, locally run Indigenous healing programs as well as funding education and research on Indigenous healing.

Healing Foundation CEO Mr Richard Weston said the continuing impact of past events on young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders should not be underestimated.

"The Healing Foundation acknowledges the affects past government policies, particularly the removal of children, continue to have on our young people," Mr Weston said.

"Our aim is to create opportunities for our young people to support each other in dealing with the issues that are affecting them, their families, and their friends, to show them that they aren't alone and that they can address these issues from a place of strength and resilience," he said.

Young Healers is conducting a national survey of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, to guide the group on the best way to support young people. Initial survey results reveal that what young people want most is youth-specific healing initiatives and increased interaction with their peers through youth forums and social networking.

The Healing Foundation's inaugural Youth Reference Group members, who will lead the Young Healers initiative, are:

- Shonai Moffatt, a Wakka Wakka woman from Brisbane
- Mark Munnich, a Gunggandji/Yawuru man from Darwin
- Julia Kaczmarek, a Badulaig/Italaig woman from Badu Island in the Torres Strait, current living in Canberra
- Jasmin Onus, a Bindal/Birri/Gunditjamara woman from Townsville, currently living in Darwin
- Blake Tatafu, a Wiradjuri/Dhungutti man from Western Sydney
- Jaeden Calyun, a Wongi/Noongar man from Port Augusta

Healing Foundation Youth Reference Group member Jasmin Onus said Young Healers is about raising awareness of what healing is and what intergenerational trauma is and how it impacts on young people.

"Most importantly, Young Healers is about coming up with tailored initiatives to address the healing needs of our youth," Ms Onus said.

The Healing Foundation's programs aim to build resilience in children and young people, support members of the Stolen Generations, assist communities to build cultural strength, and educate and train workers in sectors such as health and childcare.

More information about Young Healers, including the national survey, and the Healing Foundation is available at www.healingfoundation.org.au