



Media Release

17 November, 2017

The Royal Commission recommendations that can't be ignored

The Healing Foundation is urging for quick action on today's Royal Commission recommendations to address trauma as a key issue in achieving a better outcome for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the Northern Territory.

"We can't afford another *Bringing Them Home Report*, where most of the recommendations were ignored, so that the problems keep escalating and so does the cost to taxpayers," said Healing Foundation CEO Richard Weston.

"All of the Royal Commission's findings and recommendations are important but those relating to further research and strategies that will increase the healing of trauma can't be ignored if we want to fix the social and health issues plaguing Northern Territory communities.

"If we get this right, we will see a reduction in children entering protection and justice systems as well as less family violence, suicide and substance abuse. Our research and experience over the past seven years proves that," he said.

In its final report, handed to government today, *The Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory* recognised the ongoing impact of trauma and Intergenerational Trauma in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and its link to alarming rates of juvenile detention and children entering out-of-home care.

"While focusing on issues in the Territory, the call for greater research and intervention frameworks supports our ongoing push to scale up healing across Australia and stop the impact of Intergenerational Trauma," said Mr Weston.

"As the report highlights, trauma is the single most important public health challenge we face but we're not even scratching the surface when it comes to grappling with it and the critical gap is that there has been no strategic response.

"We've left it to the mental health system to apply western clinical approaches or the punitive systems of justice and child protection, and it should be no surprise that these systems have failed dismally."

Mr Weston warned that strategies to tackle Intergenerational Trauma need a long term commitment.

"Two hundred years of trauma will not resolve easily. Trauma over many generations requires generational solutions. Stopping and starting healing programs over the past decade has contributed to the crisis highlighted in this report."

The Royal Commission report made several recommendations relating to the need to keep Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander children connected with culture.



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“We hope for an opportunity to expand programs that are running in Don Dale around therapeutic support and culture and our successful work in the Northern Territory to build strong men and families to tackle family violence. This must be done in partnership with communities and community organisations,” said Mr Weston.

“The report has also highlighted the failures and dangers of a workforce dealing with traumatised people without even knowing it, or without the skills to do it safely and effectively.

“We hope that recommendations to improve training for staff in the juvenile justice, protection and police systems will include a strong emphasis on understanding and safely dealing with trauma.”

Partnering with Gallang Place, The Healing Foundation has recently developed a Healing Accredited Short Course for workers which will be made available to help build a national trauma informed workforce across every sector, responsible for providing services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

“This is isn’t just a problem for the Northern Territory or for one part of the system. We need a wide angle view,” said Mr Weston.

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The Healing Foundation was set up on the back of the National Apology to work with communities and address the healing needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people - www.healingfoundation.org.au.