



Media Release

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10 years on, we need to get serious about Closing the Gap

Ten years on from the national Apology, The Healing Foundation says tackling Intergenerational Trauma is the key to closing the gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In the lead up to the anniversary next week, CEO Richard Weston said: “We’ve put trauma in the too-hard basket for too long, wasting taxpayer dollars on strategies that treat symptoms but don’t change anything.

“It’s time for a new way of thinking, and a greater focus on healing unresolved trauma for the Stolen Generations and the ongoing impact of trauma for their children and grandchildren.”

Mr Weston said the latest progress report on *Closing the Gap* targets shows that efforts to address appalling levels of disadvantage have made marginal improvements, in spite of billions of dollars in government funding.

“Closing the Gap is complicated, but it’s not impossible. We just need to invest in strategies that have been proven to work, by addressing the cause of social and health problems,” said Mr Weston.

“Over the last eight years we’ve seen reductions in violence, juvenile justice rates and out-of-home care for children where healing programs have been implemented. We’ve also seen big improvements in education.

“A traumatised person can’t benefit from programs around education, training and employment. People will only make the most of those sorts of opportunities if they’ve healed and are ready to move forward.”

The Apology to the Stolen Generations, made in Federal Parliament on 13 February 2008, was a landmark event, as the first formal recognition of past atrocities and a first step towards healing.

The Healing Foundation Stolen Generations Reference Committee member Lorraine Peeters, who handed the coolamon to the Prime Minister in 2008, said the Apology was an important recommendation from the *Bringing Them Home* report.

“Emotions on the day were overwhelming because we thought it was a new beginning and other recommendations would be acted on. But a decade later, there’s still a lot of work to be done,” she said.

Mr Weston said the Healing Foundation was finalising the first full analysis of current needs for the Stolen Generations, particularly as they enter the aged care sector, and to address issues like national reparations and re-building families through culture and healing.

“This anniversary is an opportunity to celebrate the strength and richness of our culture, while focusing on a better future. I hope every Australian will find a way to mark this important day in our history, which was a day when we were all proud to be Australian,” said Mr Weston.

The Healing Foundation, which was announced to mark the first anniversary of the Apology, is coordinating and supporting activities to commemorate the 10th anniversary next week, including:

- a free public concert on the lawns of Federation Mall in Canberra
- a breakfast at Parliament House, bringing together Stolen Generations members and decision makers
- more than 80 community events around the country.

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