

We have the evidence to break the cycle of Intergenerational Trauma

The Healing Foundation is calling on broader Australia to use existing suicide reduction research to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to break the cycle of Intergenerational Trauma.

The call follows a report from WA Coroner Ros Fogliani that draws direct links between youth suicide and Intergenerational Trauma.

The Healing Foundation CEO Richard Weston said yesterday's findings were confronting but should not come as a surprise.

"If people don't have an opportunity to heal from trauma, it continues to impact on the way they think and behave, leading to a viscous cycle of poor health, violence, substance abuse and social and economic disadvantage," he said.

"But more importantly, without safe supportive spaces where trauma can be understood and managed, many children grow into adults who struggle with self-destructive, pain-based behaviours including aggression and violence, substance misuse, criminal acts, suicide and inactive lifestyles.

"We have the evidence that clearly demonstrates how healing can take place within and through trauma and grief when cultural knowledge and cultural frameworks are used alongside self-determination."

The Healing Foundation has produced a community-led suicide reduction framework that is healing informed and trauma aware building on self-determination principles of local solutions to local problems.

The framework is supported by recent research published by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare that provides an evidence-base to link Intergenerational Trauma with colonisation and the Stolen Generations.

It is the first comprehensive data set to illustrate the direct link between the forced removal of tens of thousands of children from their families and the real life experiences of Intergenerational Trauma across families and communities.

Stolen Generations and their descendants experience higher levels of adversity in relation to most of the 38 key health and welfare outcomes in the report. It is important to remember that the numbers are a demonstration of the lived experience and the pain they have had to endure over a lifetime.

"It is suggested that widespread community dysfunction preceded the rapid increase in suicide rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people born into a state of 'normative instability' – where alcohol and dysfunction are layered onto trauma and distress," Mr Weston said.

"This occurs in a broader context of deep poverty and social, economic and political exclusion as well as the loss of cultural traditions, roles and identities."

The Healing Foundation is a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation that partners with communities to heal trauma caused by the widespread and deliberate disruption of populations, cultures and languages over 230 years. This includes specific actions like the forced removal of children from their families.

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