



Media Release

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Queensland program keeping kids safe and saving taxpayer dollars

A unique school program in Brisbane is reducing the likelihood of out-of-home care and juvenile detention for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and saving the taxpayer millions of dollars, says a new study.

The latest analysis of The Healing Foundation's program with the Murri School shows that investing in projects to tackle Intergenerational Trauma significantly improves education and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children as well as reducing the burden on public funds.

It found that for every dollar spent on the healing program, the return to the Australian public is \$8.85 which means a taxpayer saving of \$6.5 million a year, based on the number of participants at the time of analysis.

Healing Foundation Board Chair Steve Larkin said the savings and benefits could be much greater if the program was expanded to schools across Australia where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders live.

"We've developed a successful and proven model, here in Queensland, that's turning around some alarming social trends," said Prof Larkin.

"Let's not waste this opportunity to break the trauma cycle and give children the opportunities they deserve. At the very least, we'd like to see educators to politicians give this report close consideration."

Professor Larkin said an independent Cost Benefit Analysis of the healing program at the Murri School demonstrated public savings through:

- potentially reducing the number of children coming into contact with the child protection system by 18.5% and progressing through the system by 30%
- reducing their likelihood of entering the juvenile justice system by nearly 14%
- significantly improved wellbeing and mental health factors, and
- improved long-term earning capacity as a result of better education outcomes.

"Murri School students are twice as likely to achieve their Year 12 certificate, than other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland and attention and attendance rates are also higher," said Prof Larkin.

"As part of the healing program children participate in a range of activities from cultural camps to formal counselling. The key to success is a whole-of-school program where families take the lead, supported by trauma-informed teachers, family support workers and psychologists.

"After the program, children tell us they feel more positive about school and family life and are more resilient to cope with stressful situations. Parents are more engaged and empowered to provide and seek support."

Professor Larkin said there was considerable research available to establish a link between Intergenerational Trauma and current social and health issues in Aboriginal and Torre Strait Islander communities.

"This report shows that if we invest wisely we can break the trauma cycle and stop future government and not-for-profit strategies from failing," he said.

For interviews and radio grabs with students, parents and teachers -<https://healingfoundation.org.au/murri-school-report-launch/>

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