



# Media Release

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## White Ribbon Day report to reduce family violence in Aboriginal communities

The Healing Foundation says an overhaul of current programs is essential to turn around the alarming trend of higher than average levels of family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

On the eve of White Ribbon Day, they have released a report which highlights current failings and outlines the details of a new framework, based on proven successes in prevention.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 35 times more likely to be hospitalised due to a family violence related assault, than other Australian women,” said The Healing Foundation CEO Richard Weston.

“The current system is failing everyone. Women and children are suffering and so are the men who want to change and keep their families together and thriving.

“But the critical message from our new report is that we can turn trends of escalating violence around, we just need to design the right programs and invest funding more wisely,” he said.

As a result of one program featured in the report, there has been a 50% drop in men registered with Correctional Services and a significant fall in violence, with women reporting they feel safer in their homes.

*Towards an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander violence prevention framework for men and boys* was developed by a knowledge circle of recognised experts, including health workers, researchers and community members. It was supported by White Ribbon Australia.

The report found higher than average rates of family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities can be linked to specific factors like Intergenerational Trauma, the destruction of positive cultural practices and ongoing disadvantage.

“Research has found a clear link between exposure to trauma and an increased risk of acting out in a violent way. And we know that our people are far more likely to be exposed to traumatic events, from an early age.

“But Aboriginal people actively avoid programs designed to address risk factors because these initiatives, based on western theory, don’t always make sense,” said Mr Weston.

“We can’t fix problems in our communities by just putting an Aboriginal spin on western programs. We need to get to the core of what’s causing people to act out in violent ways.

“Many programs fail to tackle trauma through healing or consider the importance of culture. Making assumptions that violence against women is culturally sanctioned in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is not only inaccurate, it can be dangerous.”

Mr Weston said the report promotes six critical factors proven to lead to long term success for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, by studying programs at Dardi and others in WA, NSW and the Northern Territory.

“We’ll distribute these findings widely to inform future strategies, particularly in relation to healing initiatives to break the Intergenerational Trauma cycle.”

The report also calls for programs to involve an historic context and focus on healing families and communities collectively, co-designing programs with community and supporting strong men into mentoring roles.

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