

LORRAINE PEETERS



Lorraine Peeters is a Gamilaroi/Waliwan woman from central west New South Wales.

At the age of four she was forcibly taken from her family in Brewarrina. Along with hundreds of other girls she was placed in the Cootamundra Domestic Training Home for Aboriginal Girls.

“We were brainwashed to act, speak, dress and think white and we were punished if we didn’t,” said Aunty Lorraine. “We were not allowed to talk in our language or about culture or about our families. It wasn’t until I was in my fifties that I suffered a mental health issue, trauma. There was an Aboriginal person inside, screaming to get out.”

As a result of undertaking her own healing journey, Lorraine developed the Marumali Program™, which is based on the Marumali Journey of Healing Model. It’s a unique program to increase the quality of support available to Stolen Generations members.

“When you’ve been through as much as we have, the trauma can easily be reactivated by those who don’t understand it. To prevent this, trauma-informed training should be mandatory for everyone working with our mob, especially Stolen Generations members and their families, as recommended by the Bringing them Home report.”

Lorraine works with survivors, service providers, health practitioners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inmates within correctional centres and has delivered the program to more than 3000 participants.

Lorraine says Western style counselling is not appropriate for the Stolen Generations. “Collective healing is so important for institutionalised people, you don’t have to tell or explain your story to anybody, we just know the trauma that everyone has experienced.”

Lorraine played a key role in the 2008 National Apology to the Stolen Generations, presenting the Prime Minister with a glass coolamon, a vessel traditionally used to carry babies, as a symbol of hope.

Lorraine says Australia needs to understand it’s not just the Stolen Generations that have been affected by trauma.

“Behaviour is learnt. If my children are watching me have anxiety, fear, drinking issues to numb the pain, that behaviour is learnt by little people. That will continue. We have to address this for future generations,” she said.