

Tackling Intergenerational Trauma

The Healing Foundation is calling for greater understanding of Intergenerational Trauma to improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, their families and communities.

On Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day Professor Steve Larkin, Chair of The Healing Foundation, said Australia is still grappling with the best way to deal with Intergenerational Trauma.

"Understanding Intergenerational Trauma is the key to meaningful change including addressing high numbers of children and young people entering the protection and justice systems, suicide, domestic violence and substance abuse" Professor Larkin said.

The 2017 theme for Children's Day is *Value Our Rights, Respect Our Culture, Bring Us Home*, recognising this year's 20th anniversary of the *Bringing them Home* report.

"It's time we took a holistic and long term approach to dealing with the issues left behind by that tragic part of our nation's history" said Professor Larkin.

The Healing Foundation is calling for a national Intergenerational Trauma Plan of Action to underpin all future programs addressing social and emotional wellbeing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

A Plan of Action would assist in building strong families, building strong and proud identities and investing in young people as future leaders.

"I think every Australian is concerned about the record number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being taken from their families and culture to be placed in out-of-home care, and entering the juvenile justice system.

"And while the surrounding debate about factors influencing the decision to remove a child have been important, I fear we're missing the critical point of how we reduce contact with the protection system in the first place."

Professor Larkin said research shows that children are coming to the attention of the protection system because of their increased vulnerability, pointing to a West Australian health survey that found one in five children were living in families where seven to 14 major life stress events had occurred in a period of 12 months.

"This level of dysfunction is structural and entrenched, and at its heart, is generation upon generation of unresolved trauma, caused by two centuries of mistreatment and dislocation," said Professor Larkin.

"It's not just the people who were directly stolen or abused or removed from their land and livelihood that continue to suffer the consequences. It's their children and grandchildren as well."

Media contact: Jane O'Brien 0499 877 441 jane@healingfoundation.org.au

The Healing Foundation is a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation that partners with communities to address the ongoing trauma caused by actions like the forced removal of children from their families. For more information visit www.healingfoundation.org.au

Children's Day is held on 4 August each year and is coordinated by SNAICC – National Voice for our Children.