



# HealingFoundation

Strong Spirit • Strong Culture • Strong People



[www.healingfoundation.org.au](http://www.healingfoundation.org.au)



## The role of The Healing Foundation

The Healing Foundation partners with communities to address ongoing trauma caused by the disruption and mistreatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over the past 230 years. This includes actions like the forced removal of tens of thousands of children from their families, known as the Stolen Generations.

By healing trauma, we are tackling the source of social and health problems that are far more prevalent for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including family violence, substance abuse, incarceration and out-of-home child protection.

We change lives every day by funding and supporting local healing programs that have been designed with local people and work at the individual, family and community level. These programs support healing by combining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and knowledge with best practice in western trauma theory.

The Healing Foundation is helping to create a different future by:

- generating new research and resources to establish an evidence-base for healing and best-practice strategies and build support for more effective policy and frameworks
- building leadership and capacity in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and
- strengthening the healing workforce by providing training materials and support.





## Behind the scenes

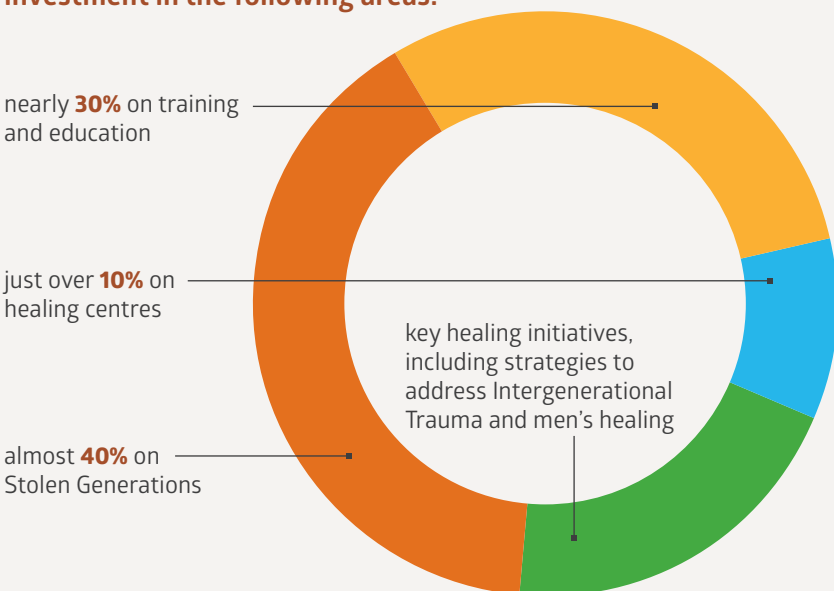
The Healing Foundation was funded by the federal government, following community consultation, to mark the first anniversary of the National Apology to the Stolen Generations. It was the first national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation established to address their ongoing healing needs.

Our work is governed by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Board with strong connections to community and a dynamic mix of experience. Our Stolen Generations reference committee ensures we meet the unique healing needs of Stolen Generations and their families. The Healing Foundation's Youth Advisory Group helps us set the right priorities and select the right tools for engagement, to tackle Intergenerational Trauma.

## Our critical focus

We continue to work closely with members of the Stolen Generations who have not had an opportunity to heal from ongoing distress. Through our collective healing approach, we are also increasing focus on reducing the impact of Intergenerational Trauma.

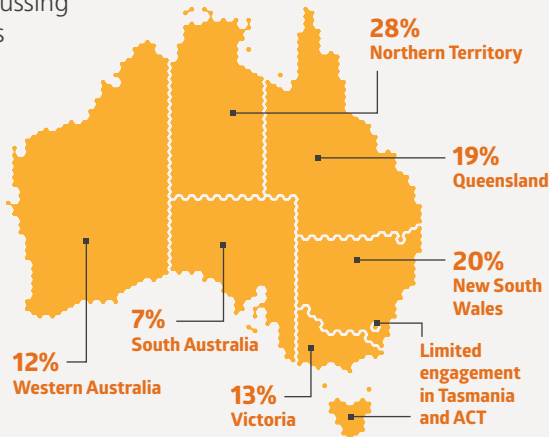
### The Healing Foundation focuses its investment in the following areas:



## Our national reach

We work across Australia, focussing efforts in states where there is a high Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population and in communities where our research shows that trauma is having the most negative impact.

The majority of our work is in urban (45%) and regional (38%) areas, but we also work in remote communities (17%).



## The change we're creating

Since 2009 The Healing Foundation has:

- assisted more than 45,000 people in their healing journeys
- funded almost 170 community based healing projects and forums
- provided nearly 500 organisations with grants for local commemorative events
- established an impressive body of evidence with over 30 evaluations and publications that show the impact of trauma and how to make healing work
- built our nation's healing capacity through the release of specific training tools to build trauma knowledge amongst people who provide services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and create a framework for working with victims of sexual assault, and
- supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to build healing centres and create more effective and integrated services.

We've also helped to shape future policy through a range of forums, from federal and state health bodies to Royal Commissions.

## Measured success

As a result of our work, we've seen advances at the individual, family and community level, proving that investment in the right healing programs will create change and reduce the burden on public funds. For example:

- more than 70% of Stolen Generations members that have participated in projects report an improved ability to care for their grief and reconnect with family and community
- men's healing programs have led to a 50% reduction in contact with Corrective Services and a drop in family violence, and
- healing programs for young people have potentially reduced contact with the protection system by 18.5% and the juvenile justice system by nearly 14%. They've also contributed to significant increases in education attainment rates.

## Addressing specific needs

Working with governments and communities, The Healing Foundation is also helping to identify and address the contemporary needs of the Stolen Generations and their families who are suffering the impacts of Intergenerational Trauma. *An Action Plan for Healing* builds on the recommendations from the historic *Bringing Them Home* report, most of which were never implemented.



## What is trauma?

Trauma effects the way people think and act and overwhelms their ability to cope and engage with life.

For the person experiencing trauma there is usually:

- heightened feelings of fear, anxiety and shame
- difficulty with trust and forming relationships
- barriers to engaging with positive activities like learning and socialising, and
- a greater risk of health and wellbeing problems, including substance abuse, mental health and anger issues.

In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, trauma is so widely experienced that it has an impact across families, communities and generations.

## What is Intergenerational Trauma?

If people don't have the opportunity to heal from trauma it's likely that their experiences and negative behaviours will start to impact on others, particularly children who are susceptible to significant developmental impact when they experience trauma at a young age. This creates a cycle of trauma, where the impact is passed from one generation to the next, creating a snowball effect of cumulative damage.

In the case of the Stolen Generations, parents might also pass on the impacts of institutionalisation finding it difficult to know how to nurture their own children because they were denied the opportunity to be nurtured themselves.

Research has shown that people are not just effected by the traumatic events that they directly experience. Witnessing or hearing about trauma for their family or community also has a direct impact.



## What is healing?

Healing is a proven way to overcome trauma and restore wellbeing, which can bring about long-term change for families and communities. Because we need to heal the past and the present, it's not a one-step process but often a life-long commitment.

The Healing Foundation has examined international best practice to determine the key elements of successful initiatives. Combining traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural healing tools with western practices achieves the best results. Key elements include:

- reconnecting with culture and identity
- restoring safe and enduring relationships, and
- understanding the impact of trauma to find healing pathways.

## Why is healing important?

Healing is the only way to bring about long-term change. Otherwise our efforts focus on treating an individual symptom, which might bring relief but not the level of change required to break the trauma cycle.

Research shows that unresolved trauma is the underlying cause of most social and health problems in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities today. If we can effectively tackle the cause – at an individual, family and community level – we can change the future and generate benefits for all Australians.



## Find out more:

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