

Sorry Day: It's everyone's role to commemorate

The Healing Foundation is calling on all Australians to commemorate Sorry Day tomorrow and play a part in breaking the trauma cycle that continues to impact on the Stolen Generations and their families.

CEO Richard Weston said acknowledging the wrongs of the past is critical to ongoing healing for Australia's Stolen Generations members whose stories of childhood trauma were buried or denied for decades.

"This is a critical part of accepting Australia's history and telling the truth about the treatment of Australia's Indigenous people during the colonisation process.

"But the forced removal of tens of thousands of children from their families and homes over a period of 70 dark years, is not just a tragic episode in our history," he said.

"Thousands of Stolen Generations members across Australia continue to suffer from a legacy of trauma that has been passed onto later generations and become the underlying cause of many social and health problems in our communities today."

The Healing Foundation is due to deliver its *Action Plan for Healing* to the federal government later this year which will identify the current needs of the Stolen Generations and outline a package of national measures to reduce the impact of trauma in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

This work was funded by the government last year, in response to the Healing Foundation's call for action to mark the 20th anniversary of the *Bringing Them Home* report which was tabled on 26 May 1997, and is now the date for Sorry Day commemorations.

"Our ongoing research is uncovering a very ugly picture of health issues, disability, poverty and disproportionate disadvantage for the Stolen Generations, which shouldn't be a surprise to any Australian," said Mr Weston.

"As we know from the courageous stories told to national inquiries and royal commissions into sexual abuse during the past two decades, the Stolen Generations suffered terrible childhood tragedies.

"They were dragged and tricked away from their families, isolated from everyone they knew and many suffered institutionalisation, racial persecution, neglect, abuse and assault.

"By failing to implement the recommendations of those past inquiries, we've helped to create a vicious cycle of trauma and symptomatic disadvantage."

Mr Weston said he was hopeful that by Sorry Day in 2019, Australia would have measures in place to right the wrongs of the past and tackle the impacts of Intergenerational Trauma.

"In the meantime, every Australian can make a difference by coming together tomorrow to remember past atrocities and recognise the work that still needs to be done to close the gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

"We shouldn't underestimate what it means to the Stolen Generations to feel that support and encouragement on such an important day," he said.



Media Release

25 May 2018

Sorry Day commemorates the anniversary of the tabling of the Bringing Them Home report into the Australian Parliament in 1997. The report chronicled the history of the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families, under laws enacted by Australian governments.

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