



The Healing Foundation and AAG's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing Advisory Group Joint Statement – 7 June 2019

The Healing Foundation and the Australian Association of Gerontology's (AAG) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Ageing Advisory Group are pushing for urgent action in aged care for survivors of the Stolen Generations.

Together the two organisations are preparing a joint submission to the *Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety* to ensure the dignity of Stolen Generations as they get older.

Data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reveals the survivors of the Stolen Generations have been significantly more impacted in terms of health and welfare outcomes even compared to their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders contemporaries, who are already facing greater challenges in Australia.

The evidence paints a picture of complex needs for the Stolen Generations who suffered profound childhood trauma when they were forcibly removed from their homes, isolated from family and culture and often institutionalised, abused and assaulted.

The Healing Foundation Stolen Generation Reference Group chair Ian Hamm said that Stolen Generations survivors were now aged 50 and over and all would be eligible for aged care by 2023.

"Given the spasmodic response to date in addressing the needs of the Stolen Generations, who's life journey has, by any measure, been a difficult one based on the trauma of childhood removal, it is only proper that we do not make the journey into ageing unnecessarily painful or burdensome." he said.

"We need to focus our efforts on breaking the trauma cycle, to relieve the stresses of ageing for the stolen generations, otherwise we will not only fail again, there will also be additional and unnecessary costs to the Australian taxpayer.

"While it is too late for many of the Stolen Generations, we need to get on with this unfinished business and provide for the specific needs of this ageing population, in a way that acknowledges their legacy of social and economic disadvantage."

A forum was held this week in Melbourne to examine and explore the needs, priorities and challenges facing survivors of the Stolen Generations seeking to enter the aged care system.

Survivors were joined by representatives from research institutes, the aged care and health sectors and state and federal governments to raise awareness and build towards a safer, more inclusive sector that considers issues such as family, kinship and culture.

AAG's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing Advisory Group co-chair Roslyn Malay said the aged care sector is not prepared for the unique needs of our Stolen Generations, many of whom have been left severely traumatised as a result of deliberate race-based policies set up by both State and Federal governments.

"We are looking for culturally appropriate aged care solutions that reduce the cost of care for everybody," she said.

"The things that work best are those that are community owned, developed and delivered – that build capability, strength and lead to the best outcomes.

"When we train service providers to understand how trauma works, they are more likely to pick up warning signs early, assess people correctly and find solutions that work."

According to the AIHW data 89% of Stolen Generations survivors did not have good health, 79% relied on government payments as their main source of income and 76% did not own their own home.

The data also shows that ageing Stolen Generations are struggling to access the support and services they need, at a greater rate than other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Ian Hamm is a Yorta Yorta man who has been actively involved in the Victorian Aboriginal community for many years. He has extensive government and community sector experience, particularly at executive and governance levels. He is currently the Board President of the Community Broadcasting Federation, Chair of Connecting Home Ltd, a Victorian Stolen Generations service and also The Healing Foundation's Stolen Generations Reference Group.

Roslyn Malay is a Kija woman from the Kimberley region of Western Australia. She has a passion for working in the area of Aboriginal ageing, particularly in the remote community setting. Roslyn is currently working as a Project Officer with the University of Western Australia, WA Centre for Health and Ageing.