



Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Via email: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

31 July 2026

Dear Secretary,

The Healing Foundation welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission on the **Support at Home Program**.

The Healing Foundation is the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation that elevates the voices and lived experiences of Stolen Generations survivors, their families and communities. We work closely with Stolen Generations Organisations that tirelessly support survivors and descendants. Founded in 2009 following national consultation and the landmark *Bringing Them Home* report, the Healing Foundation was established to implement the key report recommendation: that healing must be integrated into services for survivors.¹

We provide expert advice on the needs of ageing survivors, support survivor-led healing projects, and help educate about the continuing impacts of Australia's Stolen Generations history. We are governed by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Board and Executive, guided in our work by Stolen Generations Organisations to support survivors to tell their stories and drive their healing. We work cross-sector with governments, policy makers, diverse organisations and workforces to understand and take accountability for their role in meeting the needs of Stolen Generations survivors and intergenerational healing.

Since the *Bringing Them Home* report was handed down nearly 30 years ago, there has been no nationally coordinated response to monitor the implementation of the report's recommendations. Our February 2025 report, *'Are you waiting for us to die?' The unfinished business of Bringing Them Home*, analysed implementation of the recommendations and found that only **six percent** have been entirely fulfilled.²

¹ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. (1997). *Bringing Them Home: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*. <https://humanrights.gov.au/?a=51037>

² The Healing Foundation. (2025). *'Are you waiting for us to die?' The unfinished business of Bringing Them Home*. https://healingfoundation.org.au/media/ak5niup3/bth_report_are-you-waiting-for-us-to-die-final-2025-1.pdf

Recent research by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) demonstrates that survivors face poorer health, economic and social outcomes than other Aboriginal and Torres Strait people who were not forcibly removed from their families, communities and culture.³ Today, many survivors are now older and living with an intersection of complex socioeconomic issues, chronic health conditions and unaddressed cultural needs. While most survivors are eligible for aged care, many are not accessing the services they need, often due to fear of re-traumatisation and limited availability of culturally safe providers in their local area.⁴

Recommendations

The Healing Foundation calls on the Government to:

1. Exempt all Stolen Generations survivors from Support at Home contributions.

Consistent with Action 1.1.3 of *From Sorry to Action*, all Stolen Generations survivors should be exempt from participant contributions for Support at Home services.⁵

2. Extend redress payment exemptions to Support at Home.

Apply the announced exemption for Stolen Generations redress payment from residential aged care means testing to include the Support at Home program, in line with Action 1.1.2 of *From Sorry to Action*.⁶ This exemption should apply across all relevant financial assessments, and cover redress payments under all Commonwealth, state and territory schemes.

3. Introduce a dedicated Support at Home pathway for Stolen Generations Survivors and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Government should co-design and implement a dedicated, trauma-informed Support at Home pathway for survivors, including flexible assessment and access to support from Stolen Generations Organisations, and Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations.

4. Provide sustained funding for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and Stolen Generations Organisations.

ACCOs and SGOs are best placed to coordinate and deliver home support, especially in urban and regional areas where culturally safe markets remain inadequate. Continued and sustainable funding will secure improved engagement and outcomes for survivors.

³ AIHW. (2021). *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations aged 50 and over: updated analyses for 2018-2019*. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/indigenous-australians/indigenous-stolen-generations-50-and-over/contents/summary>

⁴ The Healing Foundation. (2025). *Are you waiting for us to die? The unfinished business of Bringing Them Home*. Retrieved from: https://healingfoundation.org.au/media/ak5niup3/bth_report_are-you-waiting-for-us-to-die-final-2025-1.pdf

⁵ The Healing Foundation. (2026). *From Sorry to Action: A plan to act on Bringing them home (2026-2028)*, p.12. https://healingfoundation.org.au/media/xmqdwbe/from_sorry_to_action.pdf

⁶ Ibid.

Redress payment exemptions must extend to Support at Home contributions.

- The Healing Foundation welcomes the Australian Government's 2026-27 Budget commitment to exempt Stolen Generations Redress Scheme payments from residential aged care means testing.⁷ This is an important step towards ensuring redress payments do not inadvertently increase survivors' aged care costs and other unintended impacts.
- As the new measure applies only to residential aged care, it does not address how retained redress payments may affect the contributions survivors pay for services under Support at Home.
- This distinction has significant implications for survivors. Evidence gathered by the Interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner indicates that survivors strongly prefer to remain at home or within Community wherever possible.⁸ Institutional care may evoke experiences of confinement, separation, and loss of autonomy associated with forced removal.
- Support at Home is likely to be the more relevant aged care pathway for many survivors. Limiting the redress payment exemption to residential aged care leaves survivors without equivalent protection for care they are **more likely** to use and feel safe receiving.
- In its present form, the Support at Home program reinforces well-documented gaps in aged care outcomes for Stolen Generation survivors, primarily by increasing financial barriers and limiting access to culturally safe and appropriate care.
- Redress payments acknowledge the harm caused by government policies and practices and should not increase the cost of services survivors' need because of that same harm.
- The announced exemption should be legislated urgently and extended to all financial assessments affecting Support at Home contributions, including redress payments made under Commonwealth, state and territory Stolen Generations schemes.

All Stolen Generations survivors must be exempt from Support at Home contributions.

- Stolen Generations survivors experience poorer health, economic and social outcomes than other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of the same age.
- These circumstances are connected to forced removal, institutionalisation, disrupted education and employment, racism and discrimination, and the loss of opportunities to accumulate wealth.

⁷ Services Australia. (2026). *Budget 2026-27: Better care for older Australians*.

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2026-05/budget-2026-27-ageing-4.pdf>

⁸ Kelly, Andrea. (2024). *Transforming Aged Care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*, 32-34.

<https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-05/transforming-aged-care-for-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people.pdf>

- We already know that Stolen Generations Survivors are ‘the gap within the gap’, with the impacts of forced removal continuing well into older age, including limited access to superannuation, little or no home equity, and few financial assets to draw on.⁹
- Compared with non-Indigenous Australians aged 50 and over, survivors are 4.1 times as likely to not own their home and 1.6 times as likely to live in a household unable to raise \$2,000 in an emergency.¹⁰
- Protecting redress payments will only assist survivors who have received them. Many survivors have no access to redress, including those removed in jurisdictions without a scheme, such as Queensland, and those whose jurisdictions schemes have ended, such as New South Wales in 2023.¹¹
- Participant contributions may deter survivors from accessing independence and everyday living services, including meals, personal care, mobility assistance, transport and domestic support. These services can determine whether an older person is able to remain safely at home.
- Financial hardship assistance is unlikely to provide an adequate safeguard where survivors must navigate another administrative process, disclose personal financial information and demonstrate hardship before receiving relief.
- Consistent with Action 1.1.3 of *From Sorry to Action*, all Stolen Generations survivors must be exempt from Support at Home contributions, regardless of whether they have received a redress payment.¹²

Support at Home requires a dedicated pathway for Stolen Generations survivors.

- Stolen Generations survivors have long expressed their aged care preference to remain at home or within Community. Remaining at home can support autonomy, ageing with dignity and connection with family, Community, culture and Country.
- Survivors may also be reluctant to engage with unfamiliar or mainstream organisations, particularly where services have limited understanding of Stolen Generations’ history and the ongoing impacts of forced removal and institutionalisation.
- As the program currently stands, Support at Home does not adequately recognise or respond to the lived experiences of many Stolen Generations survivors, including the lifelong impacts of colonisation, forced removal, institutionalisation, trauma, financial insecurity, racism, systemic discrimination, and power imbalances within aged care and health services.

⁹ The Healing Foundation. (2025). *Are you waiting for us to die? The unfinished business of Bringing Them Home*, p.14.

¹⁰ AIHW. (2021). *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations aged 50 and over: updated analyses for 2018-19*. Cat. No. IHW 257, Canberra: AIHW. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/indigenous-australians/indigenous-stolen-generations-50-and-over/contents/summary>

¹¹ The Healing Foundation. (2025). *Are you waiting for us to die? The unfinished business of Bringing Them Home*, p.14-15.

¹² The Healing Foundation. (2026). *From Sorry to Action: A plan to act on Bringing them home (2026-2028)*, p.12. https://healingfoundation.org.au/media/xmqdwbve/from_sorry_to_action.pdf

- As noted by the Inspector General in the recent report on the implementation of the Royal Commission's recommendations, a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to aged care is insufficient to provide safe and adequate care to survivors, while also conflicting with whole-of-government commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.^{13,14}
- The absence of a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care pathway within Support at Home is inconsistent with Priority Reforms 2 and 3 of the National Agreement.¹⁵
- The Support at Home program does not focus on building Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), leadership or cultural safety, but instead promotes service user engagement with mainstream and existing services which are unlikely to meet the needs of survivors and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- To ensure meaningful engagement for survivors, aged care services accessed through Support at Home must be culturally safe, trauma-aware and delivered through trusted relationships. For many Stolen Generations survivors, this means aged care and support that is community-led and delivered by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, Stolen Generations Organisations and aged care workers who understand their history, lived experiences and cultural connections to care.

Support at Home needs to be available in remote, regional and urban communities.

- Thin markets affect survivors across geographic locations, with remote communities facing the most significant barriers associated with distance, workforce and limited services. Many regional and urban areas have few, if any, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled aged care providers.
- This gap in Community-controlled services leaves survivors reliant on mainstream services, many of which are delivered by faith-based or non-Indigenous organisations that may resemble the institutional environments and practices associated with forced removal and abuse.¹⁶
- The presence of mainstream providers does not demonstrate an effective market where the available services are culturally unsafe or unsuitable for survivors. In these circumstances, at-home aged care is highly unlikely to maintain wellbeing and independence as intended and may instead increase risk or effectively exclude survivors from care despite ongoing or complex needs.

¹³ Office of the Inspector-General of Aged Care. (2025). *2025 Progress Report on the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety*, p.29.

¹⁴ National Agreement on Closing the Gap. (2025). *Priority Reforms*. <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement/priority-reforms>

¹⁵ National Agreement on Closing the Gap. (2025). *Priority Reforms*. <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement/priority-reforms>

¹⁶ Interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner. (2025). *Transforming Aged Care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*. p.30. <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-05/transforming-aged-care-for-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people.pdf>

- Investment in accessible, culturally safe home aged care can support survivors to remain safely at home and within Community while reducing pressure across hospitals and residential care.

Most critically, The Healing Foundation strongly recommends that amendments be made to ensure payments received under any Stolen Generations redress scheme are exempt from assessments of Support at Home contributions, in line with exemptions in place for residential aged care.

Without urgent reform, Stolen Generations survivors will continue to face financial and service barriers that prevent them from accessing the care they need.

The Healing Foundation welcomes the opportunity to discuss our concerns further and if additional information is required, please contact [REDACTED] via phone [REDACTED] or email [REDACTED]

Yours faithfully,

[REDACTED]

Shannan Dodson
Chief Executive Officer
The Healing Foundation