

Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committees on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Via email: rhvinquiry@aph.gov.au

1 May 2026

Dear Secretary,

The Healing Foundation welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the **Inquiry into racism, hate and violence directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people**. This submission draws on our recent report, *'Are you waiting for us to die?'* which outlines the ongoing impacts of systemic failure to implement the recommendations made in the *Bringing Them Home*¹ report.

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 the incredible 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.

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 This reflects a broader pattern of systemic inaction and failure, including a lack of alignment with the obligations and priority reforms under the National Agreement

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

on Closing the Gap.³ This is evident in the absence of genuine partnership, collaboration with Community, and meaningful redress for survivors and their families. All of this is underpinned by the ongoing failure to implement the recommendations made in *Bringing Them Home*.

This submission will address the Terms of Reference outlined by the Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, specifically 1 and 4, by drawing on the key priorities identified by Stolen Generations survivors in our 2025 report, '*Are you waiting for us to die?*'⁴. This report outlines key recommendations, including urgent action on reparations, sustained investment in healing and survivor-led services, improved access to records and family tracing, and stronger systems of accountability. It also highlights the need for nationally consistent approaches, meaningful acknowledgement, and education across institutions to ensure responses are informed by the lived experiences of survivors, their families, and descendants. An executive summary of this report has been included separately as 'Appendix A'.

1. The nature, prevalence and impact of racism, hate and violence on Stolen Generations survivors, their families, and communities

- Survivors have been calling for the implementation of the *Bringing Them Home* recommendations for nearly 30 years. The issue is not a lack of evidence or inquiries, as survivors have given evidence in more than 20 inquiries since 1998, but a failure to act on what is already known.⁵ The *Bringing Them Home* report set out a pathway for genuine reconciliation and for addressing the issues of identity, trust and racism that still significantly affect the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous people.⁶
- However, historical policies and longstanding inaction shapes present day exposure to racism, marginalisation and violence. Institutional neglect has allowed structural racism and harm to persist, including through lack of consistent acknowledgement of survivors' experiences and appropriate retribution.
- Policy and programs responses have often been directed to the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, missing Stolen Generations survivors and perpetuating structural racism. Survivors remain the most directly affected, with the enduring impacts of forced removal evident across generations.
- Removal from families and subsequent institutionalisation have resulted in the loss of cultural knowledge and identity, disrupted families and communities, and unresolved trauma.⁷ This has long-term psychological and social harm on survivors, descendants, and their families.
- Research by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) shows that Stolen Generations Survivors face poorer health, economic, and social outcomes than other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people associated with their experiences of forced removal from their families,

³ Australian Government. (2020). National Agreement on Closing the Gap. <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement/national-agreement-closing-the-gap>

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

⁵ Ibid. (p.4.)

⁶ Ibid. (p.12.)

⁷ 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>

communities, and culture. In 2018-29, survivors were 1.7 times more likely to have experienced discrimination and 1.5 times more likely to have experienced actual or threatened physical harm compared with those who were not removed.⁸

- Racism directed at survivors and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is deeply embedded within systems and institutions and across all jurisdictions. Although Australia ratified the Genocide Convention in 1948, it has never formally recognised the Stolen Generations as genocide in practice.⁹ The absence of formal recognition in law and policy has tangible consequences, which is reflected today in policy gaps, underinvestment in survivor-led healing, and the lack of comprehensive and consistent reparations.
- Survivors continue to experience the effects of state sanctioned harm without redress, which contributes to structural racism and inequity. These impacts are felt across the systems and institutions with which survivors, their families and communities interact, including health, education, justice, aged care, and child protection.
- The forced removal of children occurred within a broader context of colonisation, including racial assimilation, socially sanctioned racism and violence, and loss of land and culture. These experiences often remain unrecognised and unresolved, contributing to mental health challenges, violence, and self-harm as responses to trauma.¹⁰
- Such persisting and compounding experiences of racism are retraumatising and act as a barrier to healing. These experiences shape how survivors engage with services, contributing to distrust, reduced access to supports, disengagement from essential services, and poorer social and emotional wellbeing. The impacts are cumulative and extend across generations, limiting opportunities for healing and participation in community life.
- Decades of evidence, including multiple inquiries, have documented these harms. The issue is not from lack of awareness or knowledge, but a failure to listen to survivors and implement existing recommendations. Addressing racism requires sustained commitment to act on the findings of *Bringing Them Home* and *'Are you waiting for us to die?'*.

4. The role of law enforcement and the longstanding need for acknowledgement

- Systems and institutional responses must recognise the roles of systems, namely law enforcement, in causing harm to Stolen Generations survivors. Police and other authorities were directly involved in the forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and this legacy continues to shape survivors' experiences and interactions with these systems today.
- As highlighted in *'Are you waiting for us to die?'*, there remain significant gaps in acknowledgement across jurisdictions. While some police forces have issued formal apologies, others have not, resulting in inconsistent recognition of the harm caused. This lack of consistency undermines efforts towards reconciliation and perpetuates inequity for survivors, descendants, and communities.

⁸ 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>

⁹ United Nations. (1948). Genocide Convention. <https://treaties.un.org/doc/publication/unts/volume%2078/volume-78-i-1021-english.pdf>

¹⁰ The Healing Foundation. (2021). *Make Healing Happen*. p.75. <https://healingfoundation.org.au/media/t1xhtmlcu/make-healing-happen-report-final-may-2021.pdf>

- Recommendation 12 of our report calls for the Australian Federal Police, ACT Police, Queensland Police Service, Tasmania Police and South Australia Police to urgently deliver formal apologies to Stolen Generations survivors for their role in these harms. Delivering these apologies is a necessary step toward acknowledgement, accountability, and rebuilding trust.¹¹
- The lack of consistent acknowledgement and accountability signals that the harms experienced by Stolen Generations survivors have not been fully recognised or addressed. This has broader implications beyond survivors. The absence of full recognition, redress, and accountability for such significant experiences of harm and violence reflects and reinforces inequitable treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Without clear acknowledgement and action, the legacy of law enforcement involvement in the Stolen Generations will continue to contribute to institutional and systemic racism for survivors and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- As outlined in the recommendations of *'Are you waiting for us to die?'*, education on Stolen Generations and the compounding impacts of the unfinished business of *Bringing Them Home* must be embedded across institutional and law enforcement systems to ensure future practices and behaviours are trauma-informed, consistent, and grounded in the recognition of harm.

Stolen Generations survivors continue to experience the impacts of past and ongoing racism, harm, and violence, shaped by the failure to fully implement the recommendations of *Bringing Them Home*. Historical policies and continued inaction have allowed racism, inequity, and trauma to persist across generations. Survivors have given evidence across more than twenty inquiries, consistently raising the same issues and solutions. The challenge is not a lack of evidence, but a failure to act.

Instead of implementing what is already known, additional inquiries continued to be called and are effectively delaying meaningful change. Addressing racism requires governments, institutions and decision makers to listen to what survivors have already said and show real commitment to sustained action. The needs and priorities of Stolen Generation survivors have been clear and longstanding, as outlined in the recommendations of *'Are you waiting for us to die?'*¹². Action is needed across reparations, healing, records access, education, and accountability, guided by the voices of Stolen Generations survivors and deliver through coordinated, nationally consistent systems.

The Healing Foundation welcomes the opportunity to discuss our concerns further and if additional information is required, please contact Sarah Davidson via phone 0492 329 558 or email Sarah.Davidson@healingfoundation.org.au

Yours faithfully,



Shannan Dodson
Chief Executive Officer
The Healing Foundation

¹¹ The Healing Foundation. (2025). *Are you waiting for us to die? The unfinished business of Bringing Them Home*. (p. 22.) https://healingfoundation.org.au/media/ak5niup3/bth_report_are-you-waiting-for-us-to-die-final-2025-1.pdf

¹² Ibid. (p.12)