

Archivists' training package will improve records access for stolen generations survivors and their descendants

The Healing Foundation, in collaboration with the Australian Society of Archivists, has developed an online education package to highlight the vital importance of records access for Stolen Generations survivors and their descendants who have been affected by forced removal policies.

The *Better Access to Stolen Generations Records* learning module has been designed to assist archivists, information and support workers, new and existing professionals, and students seeking to build specialised skills to support survivors and their families.

The resources will help the sector describe the historical background of the Stolen Generations, including information relating to government policies around child removal and highlight the ongoing impacts of these policies on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today, including the recognition of intergenerational trauma.

The Healing Foundation CEO Fiona Cornforth said the training module provides a range of resources on key historical and social matters relating to the forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their communities.

“The role of records in healing, redress and reparations for Stolen Generations survivors, particularly in relation to truth-telling and reconciliation, cannot be understated,” Ms Cornforth said.

“This module will ensure that specific training is available so that Stolen Generations records are accessible, usable and will benefit individuals, families and communities trying to trace their history and reconnect with lost family members.

“As a country we need to understand the context in how these records were created and the impact on individuals and families of not having access to these records now.

“It will address the contemporary needs of Stolen Generations survivors and their descendants who have been telling us for years that they need support accessing their records under the current system.

“This training package is designed around trauma-aware, healing-informed principles with a view to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on a healing journey, accessing family records.

Improving access to and the preservation of records relating to stolen children and separated families is a key part of The Healing Foundation's *Make Healing Happen* initiative, which sets out a clear plan of action.

This includes the establishment of The Healing Foundation's Historical Records Taskforce to further the original recommendations of the 1997 *Bringing Them Home* report and provide advice to government on ensuring better access to historical records.

The *Better Access to Stolen Generations Records* learning module will help develop knowledge and understanding of key themes and provide practical guidance to people who work with Stolen Generations survivors, who themselves need access to historical records, as well as the staff of archival institutions who hold records that may be of assistance to survivors and their families.

The Australian Society of Archivists' President Nicola Laurent said the training provides best practice guidance to archivists providing access to Stolen Generations records, assisting in healing rather than perpetuating trauma.

“Better understanding both the history and ongoing impact of trauma on survivors means archivists can provide these vital records, including deeply important information around family, identity and experience, in a respectful and safe way,” Ms Laurent said.

The course will take around 3 – 4 hours to complete and is divided into six parts:

Part One: The historical background of the Stolen Generations.

Part Two: The ongoing impacts of laws, policies and practices on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today.

Part Three: Broad context of the records created in relation to the Stolen Generations and the challenges of access to these records.

Part Four: Summary of government responses to the Stolen Generations, and the implications for archives and records.

Part Five: Providing trauma-aware, healing-informed and culturally safe access to records.

Part Six: The role of records in healing, redress and reparations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

While it is a standalone training package, it can also be completed in conjunction with the **Indigenous Recordkeeping and Archives** course, which provides an introduction to the unique requirements of Indigenous recordkeeping, as well as the **Out-of-home care Records** toolkit and **Managing Trauma in Archives** toolkits developed by the ASA.

The training module was developed by Kirsten Thorpe (Worimi, Port Stephens, NSW), Lauren Booker (Garigal clan, North-West Sydney), and Cassandra Willis (Ngemba/Yuwaalaraay, Brewarrina NSW) from the University of Technology Sydney's Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education & Research in collaboration with Kirsten Wright and Nicola Laurent from the Find and Connect team at University of Melbourne.

The launch of the *Better Access to Stolen Generations Records* learning module coincides with Information Awareness Month and aligns with this year's theme “Building Trust – Adaptability and Capabilities”.



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To view the training package visit the Australian Society of Archivists website: <https://www.archivists.org.au/events/event/better-access-to-stolen-generations-records> and follow the registration steps. You'll receive an email confirming you have registered. This will also provide your login ID for the module along with instructions to set your password and how to log in to the module.

Ms Cornforth will be addressing the National Press Club of Australia to unveil the *Make Healing Happen* campaign on 2 June. Details are available here: <https://www.npc.org.au/speaker/2021/836-fiona-cornforth>

To raise awareness about Stolen Generations survivors, The Healing Foundation shares this animation about the impacts of intergenerational trauma: <https://youtu.be/Y-RaB19D13E>

The Healing Foundation is a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation that partners with communities to address trauma caused by the widespread and deliberate disruption of populations, cultures, and languages over 230 years. This includes specific actions like the forced removal of children from their families.

Media contact: Ben O'Halloran, 0474 499 911 or ben@healingfoundation.org.au