



Media Release

Wednesday 2 June 2021

UNDER EMBARGO – until 12.01am,

UNDER EMBARGO – UNTIL 12.01am, WEDNESDAY 2 JUNE 2021

SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN STOLEN GENERATIONS SURVIVOR NUMBERS SIGNALS URGENT NEED FOR GOVERNMENT SOLUTIONS IN HEALTH, AGED CARE, AND OTHER SERVICES

The Healing Foundation *Make Healing Happen* Report

The Healing Foundation's *Make Healing Happen* report, released today, signals the urgent need for policy responses from all Australian governments to assist the healing process for a growing number of Stolen Generations survivors and descendants.

The report will be officially launched at the National Press Club in Canberra by The Healing Foundation CEO Fiona Cornforth, alongside Chair of The Healing Foundation Stolen Generations Reference Group (SGRG) Ian Hamm and Co-Chair of the Youth Reference Group (YRG) Harry Williams.

The *Make Healing Happen* report – released in conjunction with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) report, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations aged 50 and over: updated analyses for 2018-19*, provides an in-depth insight into the experiences of Stolen Generations survivors and the extent and complexity of their contemporary needs today and as they grow older.

The Healing Foundation CEO Fiona Cornforth said the *Make Healing Happen* report presents demographic data about where and how Stolen Generations survivors and their families live.

“It considers the impact of forced removal on Stolen Generations descendants,” Ms Cornforth said.

Ms Cornforth said the findings of the AIHW analyses have elevated and expanded the political and policy importance of addressing the health and wellbeing needs of Stolen Generations survivors and their descendants.

“The AIHW has estimated that the number of Stolen Generations survivors has more than doubled – from 17,150 in 2014-15 to 33,600 in 2018-19,” Ms Cornforth said.

“This dramatic increase points to an urgent need for policy responses from all Australian governments, especially in the areas of health, mental health, aged care, disability, welfare, and wellbeing.

“One of the more significant findings is that all Stolen Generations survivors will by next year be eligible for aged care.

“We have a unique opportunity with the current reforms in the aged care sector to get care systems right for the special health, cultural, and healing needs of Stolen Generations survivors.

“The analyses provide clear evidence that Stolen Generations survivors and their descendants carry higher levels of disadvantage across life outcomes when compared to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

“There is a ‘gap within the gap’.”

Compared with the general non-Indigenous population aged 50 and over (on an age standardised basis), Stolen Generations survivors aged 50 and over are:

- 3 times as likely to be living with a severe disability;
- 2.7 times as likely to have poor mental health;
- 4.6 times as likely to have kidney disease;
- 3.1 times as likely to have diabetes; and
- 2.7 times as likely to have heart, stroke, or vascular disease.

Ms Cornforth said the ‘gap within the gap’ is significant and requires specific targeted attention.

Nationally, more than one third (36 per cent) of adult Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are descended from older generations who were removed - great grandparents, grandparents, parents, aunts, and uncles.

This equated to 142,200 descendants nationally in 2018-19, with the number growing over time. Again, this is a large increase – up from 114,800 in 2014-15.

In some jurisdictions - Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, and the ACT - between 40 per cent and 60 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults are descended from Stolen Generations survivors.

“Intergenerational trauma is real, and the AIHW has provided clear evidence,” Ms Cornforth said.

Based on 2014-15 data, the AIHW found that compared with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults, adult descendants of Stolen Generations are:

- 2 times as likely to feel discriminated against in the last year;
- 1.9 times as likely to have experienced actual or threatened physical violence in the last year;
- 1.6 times as likely not to have good health;
- 1.5 times as likely to have been arrested in the last five years, and 1.4 times as likely to have ever been formally charged by police.

Among the total adult Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations in each state and territory, the Australian Capital Territory had the highest proportion who were descendants (61 per cent), followed by Western Australia (55.6 per cent), South Australia (47.8 per cent), and Victoria (41.5 per cent).

“The disruption to community, cultures, and connections to families - and the current extra burden of restoration against all the odds – takes its toll,” Ms Cornforth said.

“The evidence is compelling. Removal is the origin of trauma for too many of our peoples. Yet it is simply not considered or accounted for in policy, in funding decisions, or service delivery.



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“Intergenerational trauma can end with intergenerational healing.”

Ms Cornforth said there are practical, achievable, and affordable recommendations, that fall out of the evidence, for us as a nation to make a real and lasting difference to the lives of Stolen Generations survivors and their descendants.

“These recommendations, if adopted completely, will fulfil the aspirations of the 1997 *Bringing Them Home* report,” Ms Cornforth said.

“With the *Make Healing Happen* report, The Healing Foundation is calling on all Australian governments to work together to deliver:

- nationally consistent, fair, and equitable redress for Stolen Generations survivors, their families, and descendants;
- tailored and targeted trauma-aware and healing-informed services to meet the unique aged care, health, mental health, disability, and housing needs of significantly growing numbers of ageing Stolen Generations survivors;
- nationally consistent access to historical and contemporary records (including births, deaths, marriages) for Stolen Generations survivors and their families;
- a National Intergenerational Healing Strategy to address intergenerational trauma, which includes an overarching framework that encompasses truth telling, healing through culture; self-determination; and community-led services and programs;
- a national accountability framework to monitor and report progress towards achieving better outcomes for Stolen Generations and their descendants; including reporting to parliament;
- a National Centre for Healing, incorporating a national memorial for Stolen Generations, to be located on Ngunnawal and Ngambri Country in Canberra; and
- an end to racism.

“Healing will restore dignity for those who have suffered and will ease a burden they had no say in having to carry,” Ms Cornforth said.

“Healing recognises the centrality of self-determination and the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures that have always been able to keep us safe and well.

“The *Make Healing Happen* and AIHW report, released today, together provide the evidence of the need to reform, the solutions, and the steps that government must take to achieve real healing for the nation.

“Today is Day One of our *Make Healing Happen* initiative. Now is the time to make healing happen. It is long overdue.”

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.

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