

Media Release

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INVESTMENT IN ABORIGINAL MEN'S HEALING DELIVERS SIGNIFICANT BENEFITS AND SAVINGS

Strengthening Spirit and Culture: A Cost Benefit Analysis of Dardi Munwurro's Men's Healing Programs

A new report released today shows clearly that targeted government investment in Aboriginal community-led men's healing and behaviour change programs delivers better healing outcomes and significant economic savings.

The report – [*Strengthening Spirit and Culture: A Cost Benefit Analysis of Dardi Munwurro's Men's Healing Programs*](#) – explains the findings of an analytical study by Deloitte Access Economics of the impacts of three programs delivered by Dardi Munwurro, a Victorian specialist Aboriginal healing and family violence prevention service.

The groundbreaking study, funded by The Healing Foundation, proves the economic benefits associated with Aboriginal men's healing.

Dardi Munwurro CEO, Alan Thorpe, said that Dardi's men's programs work with men to address a range of issues that can lead to violence, including trauma, mental health issues, drug and alcohol misuse, unstable housing, unemployment, and identity issues.

"We create a space where men feel safe to talk about their feelings and emotions," Mr Thorpe said.

"We talk about relationships and family, and your responsibility as an Aboriginal man. We support the men, but we challenge negative behaviours."

The report identifies a range of positive outcomes from Dardi's programs, and Deloitte has monetised the impacts of the programs stemming from clients' reduced contact with criminal justice, and improved employment outcomes.

The analysis found that each dollar invested in Dardi Munwurro is estimated to provide a return on investment of 50-190 per cent, noting that this should be viewed as a conservative estimate of benefits as it was not possible to quantify all benefits from the programs.

The report indicates the largest benefit comes from reduced rates of incarceration, with the rate of incarceration of Dardi clients decreasing from 13 per cent pre-program to 4 per cent post-program. Every avoided case of incarceration represents a saving to government of over \$90,000 per annum.

Healing Foundation CEO, Fiona Cornforth, said that there is inadequate investment in cultural practices for creating safe and well individuals and families.

"Mainstream violence prevention programs are not working for First Nations families," Ms Cornforth said.

"First Nations men's healing and violence prevention programs face a constant battle to access funding, despite the lives they change each day for survivors of trauma, and users of violence.

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“We have the evidence to back up our experiences now that there is a return on investment for the taxpayer, and ultimately savings for governments, if an investment is made in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men’s healing – our way, led by our expertise.

“What’s critical and overdue is that more of our people have the opportunity (through appropriate resourcing levels) to heal; living their lives from a place of strength more often than from a place of distress,” Ms Cornforth said.

In addition to the savings related to reduced criminal justice contact and improved employment, the study found a range of other benefits from the programs that weren’t monetised, including:

- an 80 per cent reduction in the number of men who reported having a recent episode of domestic and/family violence after program completion
- a reduction in the number of men who reported recent issues with substance abuse across all three programs, from 80 per cent pre-program to 34 per cent at the conclusion of the program
- a 100 per cent reduction in homelessness across all three programs, with 12 clients reporting homelessness prior to entering the programs and none of them reporting homelessness in the six months after program completion.

Of note, the report found that, across the programs, participants reflected a greater connection to culture, a stronger sense of identity, improved relationships, increased connection to community, and an increased responsibility for behavioural change as part of cultural roles.

Alan Thorpe said that cultural connection is vital in achieving positive behaviour change.

“The involvement of our Elders is what really sets our program apart from the mainstream men’s programs. In Aboriginal culture, Elders and other respected men hold other men accountable. The men listen to Elders because they’ve walked in their shoes,” Mr Thorpe said.

Strengthening Spirit and Culture: A Cost Benefit Analysis of Dardi Munwurro’s Men’s Healing Programs can be accessed here: <https://www.dardimunwurro.com.au/>

Dardi Munwurro (Strong Spirit) is a specialist Aboriginal family violence service. Our vision is to build stronger families and safer communities. We aim to empower and inspire individuals to heal the past, acknowledge the present, and create a positive vision for the future. We do this by delivering a range of family violence programs to break the cycle of intergenerational trauma in Aboriginal families and communities.

The Healing Foundation is a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation that partner 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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