



Unit 11 (level 2), 11 National Circuit Barton ACT 2600  
PO BOX 4363, Kingston ACT 2604

p: (02) 6272 7500 f: (02) 6272 7599

info@healingfoundation.org.au

healingfoundation.org.au

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander  
Healing Foundation Limited

ABN 92 140 312 385

Yoorrook Justice Commission  
Locked Bag 7777  
Collingwood  
VIC 3066

Dear Commission Secretary,

The Healing Foundation welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Yoorrook Justice Commission (Yoorrook).

The Healing Foundation is the national organisation that platforms and elevates the voices and lived experiences of Stolen Generations survivors, their families, and their communities. We work closely with survivors and communities to create environments for survivors to tell their stories and drive their healing.

One of the key areas The Healing Foundation has consistently advocated in is prioritised records access for Stolen Generations survivors and their descendants. Timely and culturally appropriate access to historical and contemporary records has been identified as a fundamental aspect of healing for Stolen Generations survivors and their descendants and was a key element of the recommendations made in *Bringing Them Home* nearly 30 years ago.

Despite work undertaken across jurisdictions since *Bringing Them Home*, there remains critical access barriers for both public records and privately held collections, such as church records.

As a Royal Commission established as formal truth-telling process, Yoorrook's mandate is to inquire into and report on historical and ongoing systemic injustices against First Peoples in Victoria by state and non-state entities. Yoorrook also has powers authorised to a Royal Commission, including the power to issue notice to produce documents. This is the only legislated mechanism for private records holders to be compelled to provide records, and therefore can be, for many survivors and descendants, their final avenue to obtain family history information.

The ongoing barriers in accessing records created by past governments, churches, stations, and other colonial apparatuses in their control of Aboriginal people is an ongoing and systemic injustice that continues to traumatise and re-traumatise Stolen Generations survivors and their descendants today. It impacts on individual and community efforts to identify personal and community histories, the location of family members, and the ability to drive individual and collective healing.

**The Healing Foundation is calling on Yoorrook to investigate and report on work being done to improve access to records, including both public and private collections, for Stolen Generations survivors, descendants, and organisations.**

As an example, there are survivors that have advocated for years to obtain copies of their family history records from the United Aborigines Missions (UAM) Ministries, including Kath Travis. The process to track



Level 2, 55 Wentworth Ave Kingston ACT 2604  
PO BOX 4363, Kingston ACT 2604  
p : (02) 6124 4400 f : (02) 6232 6654  
info@healingfoundation.org.au  
healingfoundation.org.au  
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander  
Healing Foundation Limited  
ABN 92 140 312 385

down and access records from institutions and private record holders is often traumatising – and re-traumatising – as experienced by Kath Travis and her family.

We understand that UAM representatives provided Yoorrook with an affidavit indicating the records, last known to be held in a Williamstown industrial unit, had been destroyed around July 2020. It is also understood that there was not sufficient evidence of the destruction provided, and that the UAM representatives were not issued with a notice to attend.

Accordingly, The Healing Foundation calls on Yoorrook to investigate and report on:

- Known or suspected privately held record collections within Victoria relating to Stolen Generations and/or forced removals of Aboriginal children.
- Current legislative and policy limitations regarding access to records for Stolen Generations survivors and descendants, and possible remedies.
- Measures to increase the resources and capacity of Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, including Stolen Generations Organisations, to house collections of records on behalf of community.
- The extent of unmarked or unknown graves of Stolen Generations survivors, and efforts to identify and mark accordingly, including through records availability.
- Requests for notice to produce orders relating to records access as part of Yoorrook's truth-telling work.
- Responses to requests for notice to produce orders relating to records access as part of Yoorrook's truth-telling work, including justifications if orders were not issued.

Further information is provided below about the ongoing issues Stolen Generations Survivors face in relation to records access.

We have also provided the executive summary of the discussion paper 'The Unfinished Business of Bringing Them Home', commissioned by The Healing Foundation and written by Professor Alison Gerard and Maureen Bates-MacKay, University of Canberra, and the final report of The Gathering of Stolen Generations Organisations from across the country, held in Garramilla / Darwin in September 2024.

We would welcome the opportunity to provide evidence to Yoorrook about our work with Stolen Generations survivors, descendants, communities, and organisations.

Yours sincerely,



Shannan Dodson  
Chief Executive Officer  
The Healing Foundation



Level 2, 55 Wentworth Ave Kingston ACT 2604  
PO BOX 4363, Kingston ACT 2604  
p : (02) 6124 4400 f : (02) 6232 6654  
info@healingfoundation.org.au  
healingfoundation.org.au

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander  
Healing Foundation Limited  
ABN 92 140 312 385

**Attachment A:** Access Barriers – Stolen Generations Historical and Contemporary Records

**Attachment B:** Executive Summary, 'The Unfinished Business of Bringing Them Home'

**Attachment C:** Final Report – The Gathering

## Access Barriers – Stolen Generations Historical and Contemporary Records

The following information is based on feedback received by The Healing Foundation through various engagement with records users, including Stolen Generations Organisations and Link Ups, researchers, and Stolen Generations survivors.

Access to historical and contemporary records provides individuals with information needed to identify and reconnect with family, culture, and Country. They shed light on often-missing context to both personal, family, and community histories. This is particularly critical for people and families who experienced forced removals under government policies.

Researchers, including Stolen Generations organisations and individual researchers, require access to a range of records to support survivors towards reunification, including government held records, such as official government records created by past government agencies, other archival and library collections, Birth, Death, and Marriage records, and privately held records. This research is highly specialised and requires training in not just family history and Stolen Generations history, but also trauma aware and healing informed approaches to working with Stolen Generations survivors.

The following summarises the key high-level access issues faced by survivors, descendants, and researchers.

**Private Collections:** There is no legislated protection of privately held collections, such as church records, to ensure they are appropriately held, conserved, described, indexed, and made accessible to Stolen Generations survivors, descendants, and organisation. Access for Stolen Generations survivors and descendants is dependent on the record holder as there is no legal mechanism to compel private records holders to make records available, outside of powers given to a Royal Commission. Many privately held collections, and particularly church records, contain vital family history information, with churches controlling many institutions controlled where Stolen Generations were forcibly removed to. Privately held records can be destroyed, either intentionally or not, without any recourse, and there are no provisions to ensure proof of destruction, or the disclosure of relevant supplementary information (for example compiled indexes, registers, or catalogues).

**Birth, Death, and Marriage Records:** Each jurisdiction's registry is managed by jurisdiction specific legislation and policy frameworks. Because of the nature of removals, researchers, including survivors, descendants, and organisations, need permissive access to all registries, which includes access to restricted records, no fees, an expediated request timeframe, and authorised information sharing.

**Archival Collections:** Access to archival collections requires special access provisions to work within restrictions that exist in relation to record access periods, third party privacy, application processes, access fees, wait times, and physical location.

**Right of Reply:** Frameworks for standard right of reply to archival, private and birth, death, and marriage records is needed to correct and / or counter records that can be disparaging, culturally inappropriate, incorrect, and / or offensive are needed.

**Training:** There are currently no legislative requirements for individuals working within the records and information management sectors, including RTI / RFI to have specialist training. This means survivors and descendants are often retraumatised in attempting to access their records, records are often unnecessarily redacted, and individuals continue to face barriers that are manageable with adequate resourcing, training, and access provisions.





**Healing Foundation**  
Strong Spirit • Strong Culture • Strong People



## Executive Summary: The Unfinished Business of Bringing Them Home Discussion Paper

Professor Alison Gerard and Maureen Bates-McKay, University of Canberra

This discussion paper examines the unfinished business of *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families* (1997). It identifies key policy considerations and suggestions for next steps on policy action, advocacy and communication. It draws on the work of the original *Bringing Them Home*

report ('BTH report') as well as two subsequent reports by The Healing Foundation: *Bringing Them Home 20 years on: an action plan for healing* (2017); and *Make Healing Happen* (2021). The Healing Foundation will use this paper as the basis for further engagement and advocacy with the sector and governments.

Specifically, the discussion paper:

- sets out a timeline of events from the BTH report until now;
- summarises key themes from the BTH report;
- identifies BTH report recommendations specifically relating to the work of The Healing Foundation and Stolen Generations organisations; and
- suggests next steps for The Healing Foundation, Stolen Generations organisations, partners and governments to continue the unfinished business of the BTH report.

IN 2024, **JUST 6%**  
OF *BRINGING THEM HOME*  
RECOMMENDATIONS HAVE  
BEEN IMPLEMENTED IN FULL.

A FURTHER 14% RECEIVE A QUALIFIED PASS.



***“...Stolen Generations survivors and their families fare worse on a range of health and social outcomes compared to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who were not removed, as well as non-Indigenous Australians.”***

## **Key outcomes of the *Bringing Them Home* report:**

The BTH report made 54 recommendations and 83 in total when all the component parts of each individual recommendation are tallied. From our desktop review and analysis of the *Bringing Them Home* report's 83 recommendations, we estimate that only 5 have been clearly implemented or just 6 percent. A further 12 recommendations receive a qualified pass, bringing the total that have been adopted to around 20 percent. Ten can be classified as a partial failure to implement and 45 have failed to be implemented. For ten the status is unclear. One is no longer applicable due to the abolition of ATSIC. Identifying which recommendations are most relevant to the current work of The Healing Foundation and Stolen Generations organisations in creating change for Stolen Generations survivors is paramount.

The *Bringing Them Home* report had many significant outcomes including:

- > **Truth-telling:** The BTH report was the first government inquiry leading to the documentation of the experiences of Stolen Generations survivors and the impacts of their forced removals. Stolen Generations

survivors report that the role of truth-telling was one of the most important outcomes for them and their families. Truth-telling 'can be a powerful tool for transforming legal thinking'.<sup>[i]</sup> It took a lot of trust, and questions have been legitimately asked as to whether this trust has been repaid.

- > **Highlighting 'a gap within a gap':** The BTH report documented the impact of forced removal on individuals, families and communities and the complex needs of survivors. This impact continues to be highlighted with recent research conducted by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in 2021 showing Stolen Generations survivors and their families fare worse on a range of health and social outcomes compared to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who were not removed, as well as non-Indigenous Australians. The *Make Healing Happen* report by The Healing Foundation called for redress; trauma informed services; improved records access; strategies on healing intergenerational trauma; a whole-of-government accountability framework; a national memorial; and an end to racism.

- > **'A missed opportunity' and thus ongoing responsibilities for Federal, State and Territory governments alongside police, churches and NGOs:** The BTH report documented a core piece of Australia's past that had been ignored. The overwhelming majority of recommendations have not been implemented, creating further 'trauma and distress'. A report produced for The Healing Foundation by Pat Anderson and Edward Tilton to mark the twentieth anniversary of the *Bringing Them Home* report concluded that '...it is clear that the failure to properly implement this vision represents a significant and missed opportunity to address trauma in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

***“...Stolen Generations survivors report that the role of truth-telling was one of the most important outcomes for them and their families...”***



communities and to provide a basis for genuine reconciliation in Australia'. The unmet recommendations place an ongoing responsibility on governments – commonwealth, state and territory – alongside other organisations such as police, churches and NGOs, to fulfil the recommendations and ensure urgent action.

## Recommendations for next steps:

This section summarises suggestions for next steps for The Healing Foundation and Stolen Generations organisations, partners and governments to continue the unfinished business of the BTH report. It includes 15 recommendations for next steps across 6 areas – monitoring and accountability, acknowledgements and apology, education and training, reparations, records/family tracing and reunions, and rehabilitation.

### Monitoring and accountability

1. The Healing Foundation is the obvious custodian of the BTH report and its recommendations. A decision should be made on whether this includes all the recommendations or just those relevant to the work of The Healing Foundation and Stolen Generations organisations.

***“...the failure to properly implement this vision represents a significant and missed opportunity to address trauma in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.”***

Additional funding is required to resource this monitoring role. The Healing Foundation website could have a purpose-built section that accounts for the recommendations and progress against them.



Kinchela Boys Home survivors find support in each other.



***“... responsibility for implementation lies with federal, state and territory governments, NGOs and other agencies such as police forces.”***

2. The Healing Foundation is a member of a number of government advisory and partnership bodies such as the Coalition of Peaks and can receive, review and influence reports and policy decisions prepared by federal, state and territory governments in response to Closing the Gap targets and other programs. This is an appropriate avenue for pressing accountability on relevant

recommendations and on the ‘gap within a gap’ identified for Stolen Generations survivors and their descendants. Where this doesn’t occur already, Stolen Generation organisations could be built into State and Territory membership of the Coalition of Aboriginal Peaks to ensure participation and a role in monitoring progress against relevant recommendations. To support this advocacy, the proposed First Nations Aged Care Commissioner may be briefed on Stolen Generations survivors’ needs and contemporary challenges.

3. Whilst The Healing Foundation may be the appropriate organisation to monitor all or most of the BTH report recommendations, the responsibility for implementation lies with Federal, State and Territory governments, NGOs and other agencies such as police forces. With the 30th anniversary of the BTH report approaching, advocacy with governments, NGOs and other agencies is critical to ensuring a commitment to implementation and bearing responsibility for gross human rights violations. Building a relationship and shared vision with the new Minister for Indigenous Australians will be essential.



National Sorry Day Policy Forum panellists discuss the priority needs of ageing Stolen Generations survivors, 2024.





Canberra's National Sorry Day Bridge Walk in support of Stolen Generations survivors.

### Acknowledgements and Apology

4. The Healing Foundation should work alongside state and territory Stolen Generations organisations and governments to urge the remaining police forces to apologise. Similarly, where it is of concern to The Healing Foundation and Stolen Generations survivors and organisations that particular churches and other NGOs have not issued an apology, work should be undertaken for this to occur. If the need to access records from these same organisations coincides then

both projects can be linked together. Perhaps there is a role for Aboriginal churches in this process, through the Australian Indigenous Ministries and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission of the National Council of Churches in Australia.

5. The Healing Foundation and Stolen Generations organisations should continue to be the custodians of National Sorry Day, promoting and providing educational resources on the significance of Sorry Day and supporting a broad range of events and commemorations.

***“...consideration needs to be shown to best meeting the unique needs of survivors, one in five of whom report living with a severe or profound disability.”***

### Education and training

6. There is now a strong role occupied by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders within the senior executive of universities across Australia. There is also a sector-wide Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy 2022-2025 and Reconciliation Action Plans. These leaders could be engaged on how universities' core business of curriculum can effectively cover the history and effects of forcible removal. Relationships with TAFEs can be built with the same targeted communication.





for the establishment of future reparations packages. There needs to be an urgent focus on Stolen Generations survivors on account of their age, and an ability to ensure that services supporting applicants have the requisite professional capabilities to work with, and for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and provide culturally safe wrap-around support.

### Reparations

7. A priority for The Healing Foundation in collaboration with Stolen Generations organisations and survivors is to push for more civil claims, and reparations packages for WA and QLD. Moreover, the significant discrepancy in some packages across states and territories necessitates advocacy for closed schemes to be revisited.
8. The Healing Foundation could play a role in mediating and lending support to advocate where problems exist with reparations, capturing the lessons learned

***“...A priority for The Healing Foundation and Stolen Generations organisations is to push for more civil claims, and reparations packages for WA and QLD.”***



Members of The Healing Foundation's Stolen Generations Reference Group with our CEO Shannan Dodson, 2024.



# 54%

OF BRINGING THEM HOME  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
HAVE FAILED TO BE IMPLEMENTED.

# 12%

FURTHER RECEIVE  
A PARTIAL FAIL.

9. The return of land holdings by churches and NGOs of institutions and homes is a key recommendation for The Healing Foundation and Stolen Generations organisations and should continue to be pursued.

## Records, family tracing and reunion

10. The Healing Foundation has an important and established role contesting institutional access to records and embedding Indigenous data sovereignty principles. This work should continue through advocacy by the Historical Records Taskforce and the 'Final Principles' it outlines.
11. Conversations with Stolen Generations survivors are critical to inform what should be done with testimonies and statements of those who have come forward to participate in redress schemes.
12. Assistance to return to country is still a key concern and within the advocacy scope of The Healing Foundation and Stolen Generations organisations. The Ambassador for First Nations People and the Minister for Indigenous Australians may be approached to identify how the needs of Stolen Generations survivors living outside Australia can be addressed, including with regard to citizenship.

## Rehabilitation

13. The Healing Foundation should continue to research the effects of forcible removal, and the impact on descendants, to inform advocacy into the future.
14. The Healing Foundation is well placed to advocate that all services and programs provided to Stolen Generations survivors emphasise local Indigenous healing and wellbeing perspectives and are grounded in intergenerational trauma-informed healing.
15. Moving forward, consideration needs to be taken on how to best meet the unique needs of survivors, one in five of whom report living with a severe or profound disability. A similar consideration should be taken for descendants of Stolen Generations survivors.

***"...The Healing Foundation has an important and established role contesting institutional access to records and embedding Indigenous data sovereignty principles."***

***13. The Healing Foundation should continue to research the effects of forcible removal, and the impact on descendants, to inform advocacy into the future.***





Historical Records Taskforce 2024.

## Conclusion

Whilst the *Bringing Them Home* report and the testimonies of the Stolen Generations survivors left an enormous legacy, progress against its recommendations has been woeful. It is hard to conceive that gross human rights violations, documented and bravely retold by survivors in public forums, can be met with systematic inaction in so many areas. Yet that is the confronting reality that exists in Australia.

Since the BTH report was tabled, both the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children into child protection systems and the mass incarceration of First Nations peoples have increased dramatically. These unmet calls for action are evident in the continued work of campaigns including [Family Matters](#) and [Change the Record](#), and other policy advocacy and reform work being led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations such as SNAICC and NATSILS. While justice and child protection are not necessarily remit areas for The Healing Foundation and Stolen Generations organisations, there are potential advocacy and partnership opportunities to reinforce the BTH report recommendations to governments and organisations working in those areas.

There is some movement in the Territories Stolen Generations Redress Scheme, and the Closing the Gap categories on youth justice and out of home care, but a 2024 Productivity Commission report has found the gap targets are worsening and that the whole agreement will fail without fundamental changes. It criticised what it said was a 'disregard' for representation by Indigenous communities and the 'little effort' undertaken to address institutional racism in justice and health.

Targeted advocacy by The Healing Foundation alongside Stolen Generations organisations is more important than ever. There is a collective approach needed to ensure the recommendations of the *Bringing Them Home* report are fully implemented. Action from governments and those agencies and institutions responsible for delivering progress against the BTH report recommendations is urgent. We cannot wait another generation.

[1] Narelle Bedford (2019). Storytelling in Our Legal System: Healing for the Stolen Generations. *Australian Feminist Law Journal*, 45(2)





# The Gathering 2024 – Final Report

Towards 2027 – Bringing them home and beyond



**HealingFoundation**

Strong Spirit • Strong Culture • Strong People





Stolen Generations, of the Dreaming and of the here and now.

ans and  
ays  
ose  
and to

# Contents

Overview	2
Calls to action	3
Good practice summary	4
Rationale	5
<b>DAY 1</b>	<b>6</b>
Opening address by Professor Steve Larkin, Chair of The Healing Foundation	6
The Long Road Home – NT Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation	7
Bringing them home – Unfinished business 27 years on	7
Records – What’s working well for records access	9
Best practice in redress – What’s next?	11
Recruiting and retaining: How do we think outside the box?	12
Looking back – Looking forward: The story of Stolen Generation organisations	13
<b>DAY 2</b>	<b>14</b>
Healing panel	14
Sustainable funding: Sustainable sector	15
Truth telling: The importance of capturing and sharing stories	16
Truth telling: Genocide in the Wildflower State	16
Aged care (two workshops)	17
<b>DAY 3</b>	<b>18</b>
Where to from here? 2027 and beyond	18
Attachment A: Organisations	20
Attachment B: Attendees	20
Attachment C: Program	21
Attachment D: Media release	22
Attachment E: Evaluation summary	23

# Overview

In September 2024, The Healing Foundation (THF) brought together more than 100 people from Stolen Generations organisations, including Stolen Generations survivors, in Garramilla (Darwin). Over three days the group connected and created collective knowledge on the work being done across Australia to support ageing Stolen Generations survivors and their families. Attendees came from every state and territory other than Tasmania. *A list of participating organisations is provided at Attachment A and statistics on attendance in Attachment B.*

It was the first time this specific group of organisations dedicated to supporting Stolen Generations survivors had come together; the agenda was shaped by their needs.

Together the collective called for:

- adequate and sustainable **funding** for Stolen Generations organisations to continue to provide services and support to survivors, their families and communities;
- the continuation of the important **truth telling** process Stolen Generations and the *Bringing them home* report commenced, until all Australians know the truth and reparations have been made;
- the **collective and intergenerational nature of our healing** to be recognised. Our young people must be at the centre of all we do, we can only be healed when our families and communities are strong in their culture and identity.

Delegates were asked to complete both pre-event and post-event surveys and feedback was overwhelmingly positive with extensive praise for the opportunity to connect and collaborate. See Attachment 5 for full evaluation details.

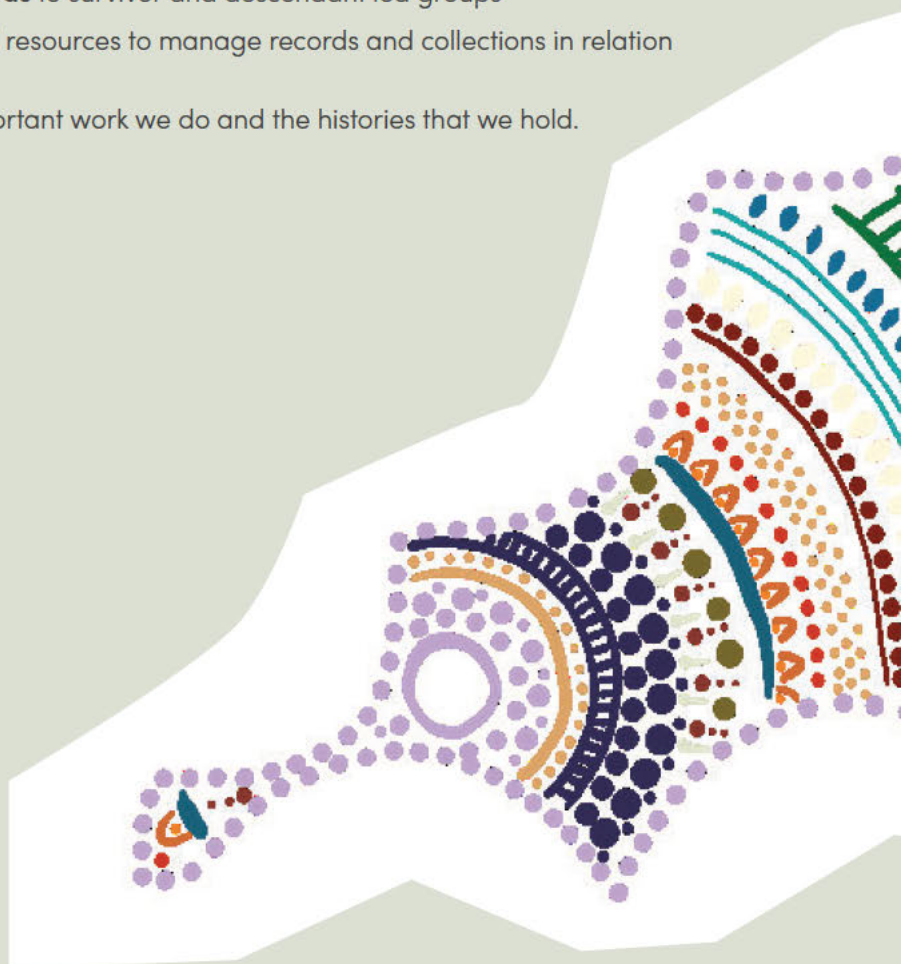
*The full calls to action are included below, and followed by high level session notes. A copy of the program and the event media release are included as attachments.*





## Calls to action

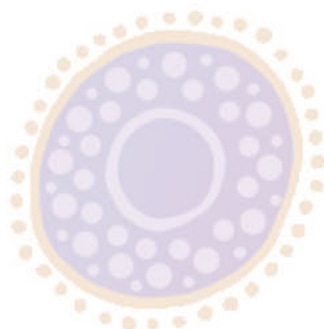
- adequate and sustainable **funding** for Stolen Generations organisations to continue to provide services and support to survivors, their families and communities
- the continuation of the important **truth telling** process Stolen Generations and the *Bringing them home* report commenced, until all Australians know the truth and reparations have been made
- that the **collective and intergenerational nature of our healing be recognised**. Our young people must be at the centre of all we do, we can only be healed when our families and communities are strong in their culture and identity
- consistent and urgent **redress for all survivors as part of a broader reparations package** that includes survivors, family and community healing and cultural restitution
- funding and policy in place to support **culturally safe and survivor led aged/elder care** – that means
  - survivors are able to choose when, where and how they are cared for as they age
  - their physical, spiritual and cultural needs are met
  - they are held in a place of respect and able to pass on their knowledge
  - descendants are able to support survivors as they age and not retraumatised
  - the culturally based healing workforce provided by SGOs is recognised and supported by adequate training and resources that recognise the weight of vicarious trauma and the value of specialist knowledge and healing work being done
- all institutions, organisations and individuals holding records relating to the forced removal of Stolen Generations, public and private, provide **prioritised and open access to the collections and progress agreements to hand back records** to survivor and descendant led groups
  - SGOs are supported with training and resources to manage records and collections in relation to Stolen Generations survivors
- SGO-driven **research** to support the important work we do and the histories that we hold.



# Good practice summary

## WHAT WE HEARD WAS WORKING ...

- building and formalising relationships between collecting institutions and registries, Stolen Generation organisations and survivors/descendants to facilitate access. Sixty known agreements are now in place nationally.
- the *Tandanya Declaration's* influence and messaging. The Declaration, made by an Expert Group on Indigenous Matters to the International Council on Archives in 2019, sets out themes and commitments for action. It seeks to reposition public archives as a model that incorporates Indigenous knowledge methods, decolonising public archives to an ethical space of encounter, respect and collaboration for Indigenous people
- redress schemes, both nationally and internationally, are delivering a body of knowledge on ways to improve access for survivors including shifting the burden of proof, allowing more time for survivors to apply and providing wraparound case management and counselling services
- the connections between Link-Up services and SGOs are important to the work they do, for instance in helping survivors and their families to access records across state and territory boundaries, track down family members and connect back to family, country and culture. This is just one way that relationships across regions and jurisdictions support SGOs to provide culturally safe and holistic support
- funding for collective healing programs and commemorations has allowed survivors to come together, heal together and mark important dates with their brothers or sisters from the same institution, families and communities
- flexible working conditions help to support the attraction and retention of culturally and community centred workforces, recognising the load that staff carry and the risk of burnout this brings.
- organisational leadership programs that are targeting young people to step up and take on some of the work that has been carried by survivors and in many cases an ageing workforce
- survivors' and descendants' stories are being captured and shared in ways that are thoughtful, trauma-informed and promote truth-telling including documentaries, podcasts and work with supportive media outlets
- knowledge is increasing about the importance of trauma aware approaches, intergenerational trauma and its impacts, and Australia's Stolen Generations history and the way this continues to affect people today





# Rationale

*“We hope the coming days will be full of yarning, learning, sharing, some laughter and a renewed sense of strength...”*

The Gathering Foreword,  
The Healing Foundation Chair and CEO.

Networks of survivors, and the organisations created by them, have been at the forefront of decades long fights for truth telling and rights. This has included calls for the Inquiry into forced removal (*Bringing them home*), providing support for the survivors and families who came forward, and continuing the work of healing for survivors and descendants.

Today around 20 Stolen Generations organisations are known to exist, they range from small volunteer run organisations or networks, built around commemoration and connection, to medium sized corporations who run a holistic service including records access, reunion support, oral history programs, counselling, supporting redress claims and more recently Elder Care support projects and initiatives. They include LinkUps, corporations based around survivors and descendants of specific institutions and organisations that operate on a regional or state basis.

The Gathering was built on calls from organisations for an opportunity to come together, to share information, build networks and shape collective calls and priorities. The Gathering was also an opportunity for cultural and professional revitalisation for a workforce that walks daily with the trauma of decades of forced removal

The Healing Foundation surveyed and built on previous feedback provided by SGOs across Australia, to gather insights, ideas and preferences on the event’s structure and content. *The program is provided at Attachment C.*

Whilst not the first gathering, it was the first in many years with new organisations joining the fold, and as in the past survivors were at the centre.

*We have tried to capture the main outcomes of sessions, as well as key quotes and conversations, however these are not always verbatim. Due to the different outcomes and structure of the various plenaries and workshops, there is variation in the notes across sessions.*

*“...there may be some tears as we share and hear the stories of loss and trauma and reflect on the urgency of the changes we are working towards.”*





# DAY 1

The Gathering was opened by Larrakia Nation with a traditional smoking ceremony by Shannon Lee, and Welcome to Country led by Edwin Fejo, joined by Dottie Fejo and her dance group. Dance, ceremony and language are central to the cultural governance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander gatherings. Acknowledging local customs and lore, but also an intentional act of restoring elements of culture, many of which were once forbidden, and celebrating opportunities to continue the passage of knowledge through generations – despite forced removal.

## Opening address by Professor Steve Larkin, Chair of The Healing Foundation

In a powerful speech, Professor Larkin described the current situation for Stolen Generations survivors and Aboriginal people as “a national crisis” on which we need to act with urgency and in solidarity.

He called on attending organisations to “come together with collective action” on the priority needs of survivors.

“We’ve lost many survivors, and their descendants due to the impact of forced removal and racist policies. Change is urgent.”

“We are still seeing the perpetual cycle of intergenerational trauma. And the ‘gap within the gap’ that survivors are facing.”

**Professor Larkin said until now, there has never been a collaborative and systematic approach to address the Stolen Generations needs and rights. Now, with all survivors eligible for aged care and the 30th anniversary of the *Bringing them home* report approaching in 2027, a different approach is needed.**

“We are the best people with whom to co-create and co-design. Governments should talk to us first, seek and follow our advice, and both recognise and support our leadership. We have a lot of good ideas to contribute... few people understand the inner strength and resilience of our people and particularly Stolen Generations survivors as well as you do.”

“More than ever, it is time to stand up for ourselves... as a sector. It’s time for us to get organised and think about the best way to do that.”

“Too many stolen children have already passed on without justice for the harm they experienced, and for the effects on their descendants.”

“Lives are at stake. Quality of life is at stake. Health and wellbeing. Justice and rights. Reparation, redress, and the capacity for families to reconnect.”







## The Long Road Home – NT Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation

*“We are a small but mighty organisation”*

The Stolen Generations organisations-led discussions were opened by The Northern Territory Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation (NTSGAC). **Survivors and staff centred the local Stolen Generations history and illustrated the careful, emotionally complex work they do every day to help people connect to family, country and get access to their records.**

The panellists were led by a survivor, Auntie Marie Allen who shared her story of removal likening it to “throwing plates up in the air, and that’s where they landed – the only thing wrong was the colour of our skin”.

*“We didn’t go away, we not going anywhere... we’re not victims, we’re survivors and we’ll keep going on.”*

On being an organisation created by survivors, with the staff connected to survivors, many being descendants. “We have grown up supporting survivors, in our families and community, that’s just what we did.”

Navigating trauma and vicarious trauma is part of their work: “we all cry together in the office sometimes”. “It’s good tears as it’s healing and sharing”.

They talked about the book they had created, the first written account of survivors in the Northern Territory. Maisie Austin and others from NTSGAC consulted with survivors from the 7 Northern Territory institutions to capture and share their history.

*“Our old people are going to guide us through so we can be heard.”*

*“Very grateful to be able to support this work, to help people connect to country and obtain their records.”*

## Bringing them home – Unfinished business 27 years on

*“We’re not going to come to terms with this history unless we retell it fully in a way that embraces the impact of colonisation on the people who were here first. This reluctance to embrace truth telling is part of this settler anxiety.”* Professor Mick Dodson AM

**PURPOSE:** To introduce the sector to a new discussion paper on the unfinished business of the *Bringing them home* (BTH) report, reflect on the BTH report and outstanding recommendations and discuss next steps.

**SUMMARY:** The Healing Foundation’s CEO Shannan Dodson provided an update on the current status of the BTH report recommendations as part of a desktop review conducted in collaboration with the University of Canberra.

The review outlines suggested next steps for The Healing Foundation and the SGO sector to work with governments and other key stakeholders to progress priority recommendations.

This was followed by a conversation between Shannan Dodson and former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Mick Dodson AM (who was one of the leads of BTH) and a delegate workshop.

Professor Mick Dodson AM spoke about the impact the *Bringing them home* inquiry had on those who came forward to give evidence, as well as the commissioners and staff. He spoke about the huge political resistance at the time to using the term ‘genocide’ to describe the Stolen Generations policies and practices, and described the lack of action to date as **“deplorable, rubbing salt in the wounds of the disaster that was the Stolen Generations”**.

Delegates reviewed the BTH themes and recommendations and gave feedback on the role of their organisations in progressing next steps and advising what is working on the ground. Discussions included the need for Stolen Generations organisations to have more opportunity to provide feedback on the recommendations for next steps.



**KEY THEMES:**

- **SGOs, survivors and Indigenous communities need to be at the forefront** of any discussions and decisions regarding survivors and families
- the need for **accountability mechanisms**, such as an annual report card for survivors and descendants on the progress of implementation
- **The Healing Foundation** needs to drive the national messaging and stay true to supporting Stolen Generations survivors, that is the mandate and it's important not to be pulled in other directions
- we need to establish a **collective and united front**, teamwork and communication needs to be stronger
- **education programs** are needed for all levels of the education system, co-designed through state-based partnerships, supporting SGOs to create localised content and resources
- **SGOs funded** to host Sorry Day events; create educational resources; undertake training on records access and family tracing and reunions; resources for welcome home ceremonies; dedicated research positions
- better mechanisms to collect **data that captures the impact** of pre/post reunification, returning to country, stories of the journeys of survivors in returning home and reunification and organisational data for truth telling and supporting financial sustainability
- review of **unmarked graves**, recognising survivors at gravesites and fencing off sacred sites / burial sites
- governments should be **legislating the release of records** for survivors, with sanctions for organisations and institutions that don't release them. Processes to access records need to be simplified and we need more opportunities for information sharing, including partnerships and agreements at all levels
- **rehabilitation and intergenerational healing** should include local programs and cultural activities for example camps, going back to country and community, smoking ceremonies, repairing relationships with communities, healing activities and safe spaces for survivors, descendants and families to share their stories
- **holistic support** for survivors and descendants including Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB), culturally safe health care and ageing supports, education and financial literacy – gold card / health care card for survivors (similar to veterans)
- **nationally consistent and equitable reparations/compensation** packages for all survivors, and for families in all locations that prevent trauma for survivors and re-telling of their stories

*"We shouldn't have to go through this process of taking a class action [reparations] and getting the little crumbs that are left after the lawyers have been paid."* Attendee

*"When you put aside the anger and rage over the lack of implementation, the simple answer is get on with it – implement all the recommendations."*

Professor Mick Dodson AM







## Records – What’s working well for records access

**CHAIR:** Dr Jenni Caruso (South Australian Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation)

**PANELLISTS:** Kayleen Kennedy (Yorgum), Phyllis Williams (National Archives of Australia), Sherilyn Dean (National Indigenous Australians Agency)

**PURPOSE:** To workshop how ongoing barriers to records access are being addressed – what is working and what can be improved? Panellists brought expertise from different perspectives including researchers, archivists, and family histories of accessing records.

**SUMMARY:** Cultivating good relationships between collecting institutions and registries, SGOs and survivors/descendants is key to facilitating records access. People spoke about the importance of easily accessible archives and keeping places in allowing them to build a map of family.

Key challenges were around the ongoing intentional destruction of records, and issues with accessing Native Title records. These were underpinned by the ongoing inconsistency with records access across the jurisdictions, the lack of standard access to both government and private collections, and the lack of special access provisions for Stolen Generations survivors or their families.

*“We had boxes of information but didn’t know what to look for.”*

*“We do use oral history as well but the written records, as awful as they are to read because of the way that government agencies wrote about our people, it is really important to access those records so that we can provide to Stolen Generations survivors their history, their family history, to know where they’ve come from, what’s impacted on them, and to have that record for future generations. Recording people’s stories is also really important and powerful and that information belongs to our Stolen Generations clients so they can share that as they see fit.”*

Link-Up QLD CEO Pat Thompson





### KEY POINTS:

#### WHAT'S WORKING

- strong **relationships** between collecting institutions and registries, SGOs and survivors/ descendants can help to facilitate the development of MOUs and other agreements, which often facilitate access – 60 agreements nationally now
- **Tandanya Declaration** being considered more and more by records holders

#### WHAT'S NEEDED

- **unified national legislated access** – i.e. special and prioritised access for survivors and descendants
- **collective and collaborative action across major institutions** to facilitate access
- **specially trained researchers and archivists**, particularly Indigenous people
- records should be provided to community for **cultural safekeeping with adequate funding to digitise, preserve and provide access to families**
- **right of reply** to inaccurate, offensive or culturally inappropriate information contained in records

#### CHALLENGES

- strong **relationships are based on individuals**, and when individuals leave an organisation, relationships can end
- **no standard national access for Stolen Generations survivors**: it can be difficult to find out where your info is held and get access to it
- records can be difficult to understand, might not be helpful: "lots of papers but **still no answers**"
- **wrong connections being made**, for example people mentioned who weren't related, poor attempts at genealogy
- intentional **destruction or hiding of records** still occurs
- access to non-government records is **at the whim of the records holder** and access can be revoked
- governments still don't know the extent of records that are held – need for **discoverability**, investment
- non-Indigenous family researchers have been given access to records when the family hasn't
- not enough **resourcing and staffing** allocated to detailed cataloguing, digitising and online accessibility



## Best practice in redress – What's next?

*"Reparations wasn't invented by us... these are based on international standards sanctioned by the United Nations."* Professor Mick Dodson AM

**CHAIR:** Aden Ridgeway (The Healing Foundation, Board Director)

**PANELLISTS:** Lisa Zammit (Connecting Home), Gary Oliver (Knowmore legal), Tony Hansen (The Healing Foundation, Stolen Generations Reference Group and Yokai) and David Wragge (The Healing Foundation, Stolen Generations Reference Group and Cherbourg Boys)

**PURPOSE:** To identify redress scheme strategies or approaches that have supported access and healing for survivors, and can be upheld as best practice standards for new schemes.

**SUMMARY:** The session was run as a discussion between delegates and panel members and covered experiences and major issues or roadblocks they have encountered with redress schemes in different jurisdictions. The group called for assistance through The Healing Foundation to highlight the following issues with government:

- **extended time limits** to access redress schemes in some jurisdictions
- long **delays** in accessing their records
- what happens in instances where **churches** or other institutions don't accept responsibility, how do we support survivors in that case?
- could we look at **international processes/ international law avenues** i.e. to replicate what we need to do here?

### KEY POINTS:

- Victoria is the only jurisdiction where the government has the burden of proof, and is often seen as the **best model** to date
- there is widespread **confusion about the different redress schemes** across Australia and concerns about the **time limitations** on applying to them. Survivors request time limits be expanded to enable them to consider all their options
- **counsellors** must also be funded to support survivors. The Victorian model includes support for case management, disability, and accessing the National Redress Scheme
- **information must be clear and simple** – jargon can lock survivors out of the process
- all survivors highlighted the **difficulties in accessing their records**, and seek support to address **lengthy waiting times and a reluctance to assist survivors**
- **claim farming** – many survivors reported that they are being pressured by law firms towards a class action rather than mounting individual claims, meaning more money to the law firms and less to survivors. The burden of proof is higher in a civil case, creating additional stress for survivors
- **Elder abuse** is a major issue especially once survivors receive financial compensation payments. Elders need support to deal with pressures from their families for access to their compensation

*"Are they waiting for us all to die?"*



## Recruiting and retaining: How do we think outside the box?

**CHAIR:** Professor Steve Larkin (The Healing Foundation, Board Chair)

**PANELLISTS:** Raelene Rosas, Netta Hunter and Olivia Graham from NTSGAC; Jenny Day and Darlene Leeson from Sister Kate's Home Kids Aboriginal Corporation (Sister Kate's)

**OVERVIEW:** The session was a panel led discussion on understanding the unique workforce strengths and challenges of Stolen Generations organisations.

### NTSGAC:

- a lot of the **pull for the employees in their organisation is cultural**
  - there isn't the funding allocation for competitive salaries, leaving their workers paid less for their qualifications, experience and the type of work they do than comparative sectors such as government.
- the **cultural element of their work** with many being descendants, the caring for survivors had been something done within their family and community since they were young
  - for the survivors using the service, they don't see them as workers, **they are family or community** for them.

On the complexity and trauma that they work with an audience member noted "We can't do this work properly if we haven't done our own healing." They added that "we have a problem of being able to build the data that tells the story of the work we do, and the journey of survivors as they go through processes of reunification... rather than what government wants to count."

### SISTER KATE'S:

- the **challenge of regenerating their membership**, noting that they started small, focusing on targeted relationships and engagement through cultural practices.
- the handing of a land parcel has enabled engagement in cultural practice around the use of the **land as a healing place**, helping to build relationships.

### KEY THEMES:

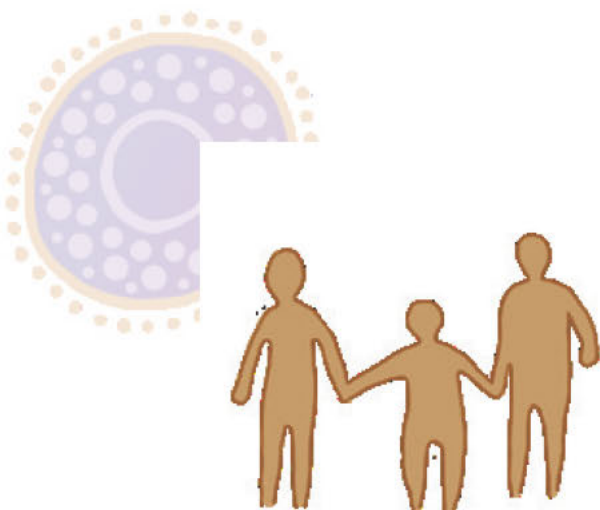
- Stolen Generations organisations are a **culturally and community centric** workforce (which is difficult for staff in terms of burnout and vicarious trauma)

*"Our organisation structure is built on that circle of survivors who came together all those years ago." KBHAC*

- government **funding barriers** to staff attraction and retention,
- reporting processes don't capture the **complexity of the work** done and time needed to provide quality support and care – call for **reporting** methods to track and understand the level and form of care provided by SGOs
- **flexible working conditions** help to support the attraction and retention of workforce and the work that they do
- need to organise in an **appropriate structure** to be understood as a sector-based workforce
- building **understanding of survivor needs** across services, including ACCHOs. Partnerships between SGOs and ACCHOs can be beneficial but require resources that SGOs often don't have

*"We need training for all services, just because they are Aboriginal services, it doesn't mean they understand us."*

Survivor



# Looking back – Looking forward: The story of Stolen Generation organisations

**CHAIR:** Rachael Hocking and Craig Quartermaine

**PANEL:** Uncle Michael Welsh, Uncle Robert Young, Uncle Roger Jarrett from Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation (KBH); Pat Thompson from Link-Up QLD

**PURPOSE:** To provide detailed insights into the work of Stolen Generations organisations, through conversations with survivors and descendants from Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation and Link-Up QLD. Both organisations commemorate significant milestones this year, 100 years since KBH opened, and Link-Up QLD’s 40th birthday.

**HIGHLIGHTS:**

- a number of uncles are ageing alone as they never had families, **they want to grow old with the brothers they grew up with** in the boys’ home

*“That’s where our love was lost and that’s where we need to get it back”*

Tiffany sharing an uncle’s comment about their vision for the KBH site to become a memorial site/Elders’ village

- survivors talked about not being able to **share the pain** they experienced for so long because of how they were programmed, and how talking about it now helps them become free

*“It only hurts if we don’t talk about it.”*

Uncle Michael Welsh

*“There are mob out there who are still suffering in silence”* Staff member

- one survivor grew up 150 yards from his mum. They walked the same street for years, not knowing the other lived there
- staff talked about their **huge role of reuniting families and supporting survivors:**

*“What do we do? It’s what don’t we do, as we’ll do anything” (to help survivors as part of their work).*

KBH descendant and KBHAC case worker Lesley Franks

*“We take people back to country so they are where they belong.”*

Link-Up QLD CEO Pat Thompson

*“We deal with a lot of people from all around the country so when we do our research it is working with institutions in other states to gather records, to help people piece back together their family history, some of them who know absolutely nothing because they’ve been adopted by non-Indigenous people who haven’t in some cases realised the importance of making sure our people remain connected to culture and to country.”*

Link-Up QLD CEO Pat Thompson

*“Link-Up was around before the Bringing them home report, before that inquiry. Link-Up NSW was the very first Link-Up to be established and Link-Up QLD followed just a short time after that.”* Link-Up QLD CEO Pat Thompson

*“We research records to link people back to their families or their country. We prepare family trees and a research report which is very detailed because in terms of reuniting people we have to make sure that we are reuniting people in the right way and to their right country and to their families.”* Link-Up QLD CEO Pat Thompson

- Young ones are seen as the **knowledge holders of the future**



## DAY 2

### Healing panel

Community controlled and culturally centred, healing now and beyond – what does it look like for communities

**CHAIR:** Kirstie Parker

**PANELLISTS:** Aunty Lorraine Peeters (Coota Girls), Samuel Bon-Wosomo and Margaret Wynmarra (Torres Strait Islands representatives), Blake Tatafu (The Healing Foundation, Youth Reference Group), Laurel Sellers (Yorgum)

**PURPOSE:** To bring Elders and young people, survivors and descendants, together to discuss the future of healing.

**SUMMARY:** The group spoke about leadership of organisations being passed from ‘us oldies’ to descendants, the importance of family and intergenerational healing, and how tiring it can be to tell your story of removal repeatedly. **They acknowledged the lifelong and intergenerational pain that has resulted from forced removals and discussed how people move forward with healing and pride.**

*“This one policy has broken the back of Aboriginal families in this county by taking their children.”*

*“They assess us on our behaviour not the core problem.”* Aunty Lorraine Peeters

#### KEY POINTS:

- the constraints of operating within a **system built by non-Indigenous people for non-Indigenous people**

*“We work under systems that oppress us, and it’s hard.”*

- the **lack of cultural capability among some health and education workers** is a major challenge for Elders and places an additional load on families and communities. People were concerned about the lack of services and people “who are good enough for people, who understand our people, who can give appropriate care to our people”, including appropriate housing for Elders, and have a vision to activate young people “to develop a workforce that’s led by us”

*“I worry that too many of our old people will pass on to the dreaming without possible supports”* Blake Tatafu

- the challenges of an **education system that doesn’t reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures** and histories – ensuring kids have a good education and also know their culture, and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history is placed at the forefront of our education system
- the “physical healing” that can come from knowing your **identity**, of knowing where you belong and where you come from; and the ongoing impact of removals on identity

*“When you don’t have identity, you don’t stand up with pride”* Sam Bon-Wosomo

- funding and sector organisation – **removing funding from religious and non-Indigenous organisations**, greater collaboration across Aboriginal organisations
- the need for **family and intergenerational healing** including re-engagement with culture, the role of young people as future leaders, and everyone’s responsibility to bring forward solutions within their own communities
- the huge mental health issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander **young people** and the need for justice reinvestment: “instead of locking kids up look at other models and programs that can prevent them from going inside”







## Sustainable funding: Sustainable sector

What does a sustainable sector for Stolen Generations survivors look like?

**CHAIR:** Shannan Dodson (The Healing Foundation, CEO)

**PURPOSE:** To explore what a sustainable sector for Stolen Generations survivors looks like, and how we can shape the Collective Healing Grants Program for success and future proofing.

**SUMMARY:** Organisations discussed facing financial constraints, staffing issues, and the need for sustainable, long term funding. There was a strong emphasis on the unique needs of Stolen Generations survivors, including intergenerational projects, memorials, and culturally sensitive services. Remote locations and compliance with ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) regulations add to the complexity of managing these projects.

### KEY POINTS:

- **funding and financial concerns** the need for adequate, longer term funding with CPI adjustments, funding for salaries and travel, capital funding, recognition of in-kind contributions, exploration of alternative funding models for smaller organisations and recognition of the impact of retention challenges on potential underspends
- **organisational capacity and staffing challenges** including flow on effects of insufficient operational funding, retention issues resulting from the high stress environment, the need for trauma-informed and culturally sensitive staff including training needs and funded research officers to help provide wraparound services, the impact of competing priorities like redress applications on meeting KPIs
- **project sustainability and program management** including extending existing programs, interest in cross-organisation projects, challenges with timing of CHG rounds (near Christmas) and a desire for more information and development sessions on the grants process.
- **survivor-specific needs** including highlighting survivor-led outcomes from funding initiatives; the idea of community centres or hubs for survivors; the need for ongoing funding for memorials, commemorations, and grave site marking; upfront funding for Sorry Business and burials; the urgency of identifying intergenerational and family funding outcomes; and difficulties in accessing SEWB workers and specialised services for survivors.
- **geographical and demographic challenges** including the need to update estimates of the number of Stolen Generations survivors and the higher costs and inequality of remote locations.
- **government and policy interaction** including a preference for THF to administer grant reporting to reduce the burden on smaller organisations, challenges of complying with ESG criteria, plans for a delegation of Link-Ups to advocate to government about funding issues.



## Truth telling: The importance of capturing and sharing stories

**CHAIR:** Rachael Hocking

**PANEL:** Tisha Carter (Running Water Community Press), Ellen Karimanovic (The Healing Foundation's Youth Reference Group), Uncle Widdy and Uncle Robert (KBH), Mark Bin Bakar (Kimberley Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation), Craig Quartermaine.

**PURPOSE:** To share experiences and the importance of truth telling projects across the sector.

**SUMMARY:** Panel members shared stories of their experiences working on truth telling projects, including lived experiences and stories from survivors, descendants, identity, community priorities and reunification, through books, podcasts and journalism. Did not make it to workshop phase.

### KEY POINTS:

- organisations and survivors to consider legal advice and protocols to protect **Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP)** before sharing stories especially via the internet
- decision-making on content for the *Healing our Way* podcast was worked through with the Youth Reference Group and based on the experiences that youth were facing in their communities.
- **what tools can be used for storytelling** and how to best promote it, developing concepts and working with black media, family members (particularly younger generations) to help capture stories through technology and sharing online / social media
- barriers when producing content included the **cultural load** that mob take on, and normalising discussions on heavy topics (such as suicide, sexual abuse, drugs and alcohol)
- ensuring **social and emotional wellbeing support** is provided to those reading / listening to the stories by using content warnings and contact info for support such as 13 YARN or Lifeline.
- how we collectively take **control over our stories** and ensure that **truth telling** remains a key focus of the nation

"Our people are really resilient and I think it's really important that we share those stories about our history and the awful things that have happened to our people in terms of removing children from their families, relocating them all over the country." Link-Up QLD CEO Pat Thompson

## Truth telling: Genocide in the Wildflower State

### Screening and Q&A

**CHAIR:** Jim Morrison, Yokai

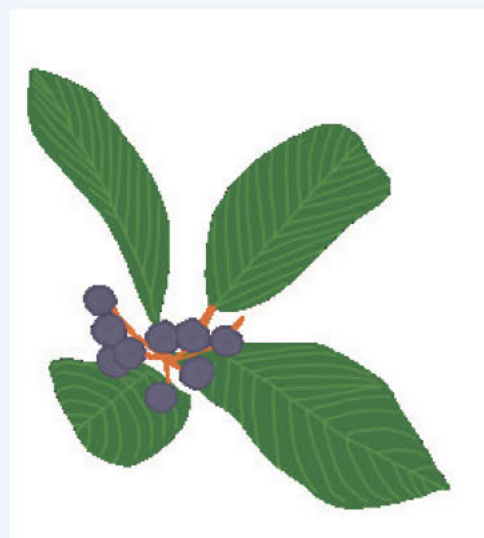
**PANEL:** Yokai

**PURPOSE:** To show a screening of the Genocide in the Wildflower State film followed by a Q&A with Yokai

**SUMMARY:** Session run by Yokai to promote their film, followed by a Q&A hosted by Yokai. Allowed floor to be open to reiterate the importance of truth-telling and documentaries such as this.

### KEY POINTS:

- recording the documentary was a **cathartic experience** for survivors involved
- the importance of using this **platform to challenge the WA government** on their lack of movement around redress for survivors
- **anger and pain that survivors still hold** and still manage when reflecting on their childhoods in care
- Yokai encourages viewers who have been moved by the documentary to reach out to WA Premier and Minister for Indigenous Affairs to reinforce the importance of redress in WA
- attendees all reflected on the importance of truth telling documentaries like this.





## Aged care (two workshops)

What does aged care and ageing well look like for Stolen Generations survivors?

Supports for Elder care services

*"Stolen Generations survivors are now all aged over 50, where access to the right care as they age is crucial. Our current aged care system is not fit for purpose and risks retraumatizing many and/or denying them a quality of life they not only entitled to but deserve."*

Professor Steve Larkin, Chair of The Healing Foundation

**SESSION 1:** Rachel Bobir, Murawin

**SESSION 2:** Sister Kate's; Ramnik Walia – Darwin Community Legal Network

**OVERVIEW:** The first aged care session introduced a project on Stolen Generations Elder care being delivered by Murawin on behalf of The Healing Foundation.

- an overview of the project that is aimed at understanding how **services**, including SGOs and aged care workers, can be supported to **care for Stolen Generation survivors**.

### FEEDBACK:

- the **urgency** of the work and the need to look at **options to provide care outside of institutions** (investing in communities; ability to care) and
- the need for the consultation to be informed by appropriate **terminology**
- defining the role **SGOs** could play in building a better workforce
- the need to advocate to the **Aged Care Quality Commission** and
- developing opportunities for community to provide care were raised as opportunities or avenues for change
- tapping Stolen Generations organisations into the project as it develops for access to initial resources such as the environment scan.

*"How do we build our capacity to support our mob in our country, in their homes?"*

Karlie Stewart, The Healing Foundation's Youth Reference Group

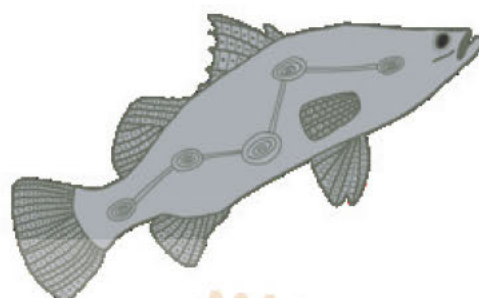
*"Guidelines need to change to meet the needs of survivors."*

The second session included representatives of Sister Kate's and the Darwin Community Legal Network and was designed to look at programs and services that SGOs could access to support survivors and families.

### KEY POINTS:

- **how redress created needs** for financial literacy support and access to advocacy services external to community so there's privacy t
- **ageing survivors can be preyed upon** by a number of providers including banks, housing and aged care service providers

*"Our ageing clients need more, to come quicker."*



## DAY 3

### Where to from here? 2027 and beyond

**CHAIR:** Kirstie Parker

**PANELLISTS:** The Healing Foundation's CEO Shannan Dodson; Aden Ridgeway, Nigel Browne and Ivy Trevallion from The Healing Foundation's board

**PURPOSE:** A yarning circle and workshop to reflect on the event and discuss 'what's next' and prioritise actions from The Gathering. A conversation between Shannan and the board members was followed by each table identifying their key priorities.

**SUMMARY:** The conversation echoed the themes of the entire gathering. Topics included the healing created by coming together; how we all work together to pursue outstanding actions, including on the *Bringing them home* report; the role of young people; culturally appropriate elder care and other services; truth telling and keeping places; the need for better funding, redress and a legislated handover of records; more appropriate data collection; accountability for unmarked or removed graves; intergenerational healing and cultural connection for families and communities; and the urgency of capturing survivor stories.

#### KEY POINTS:

- the **healing value of the gathering** for participants, wherever they are in that process; the enormous resilience, strength and good humour of survivors in the face of great trauma

*"I feel safest in these walls when we are here together."*

- The **Healing Foundation's role in collaboration with Stolen Generations organisations** in advocating for the needs of Stolen Generations survivors and helping to share our stories "ripples in our communities"
- the need to **increase connections and collaboration between relevant organisations** and raise awareness of relevant supports; a strong desire among organisations to work closely together as one body
- discussion on how we can best bring about action on the *Bringing them home* recommendations





- survivors and other Elders calling on **young people to step up** and advocate on behalf of Stolen Generations survivors; young people accepting the call to learn from Elders and continue their important work “with great pride”
- **Elder care with justice and dignity at the core:** how do we build community capacity for aged care support; the creation of a Gold Card for survivors
- the ongoing importance of **truth telling** including through **education** and Australia as a whole owning our Stolen Generations history and the ongoing impacts

*“We must remember that this is not an individual story, this is an Australian story – our shared history. We had no choice in what happened to us.”*

*“The people who were taken, we carry that silence and modify our behaviours to satisfy what is acceptable by white Australia.” Jenni*

- sustainable, adequate **funding** to support Stolen Generations and their families

*“We need to find all the survivors who haven’t found us, to help with healing and coming together. Healing is different for all of us.”*

- **redress** for all survivors across Australia, living and deceased, and quicker processing of claims

*“A lot of our people don’t have a voice, a lot of our people died young. I do this for my brothers and sisters I grew up with right across the country.” Tony*

- legislated handover of Stolen Generations **records** and documents, including from churches, with future safekeeping entrusted to community

*“Records are so much bigger than what’s on paper, it’s someone’s journey and identity – where they came from.”*

- **culturally appropriate services**, designed by survivors and delivered by trauma informed staff who understand
- **healing or keeping places** for Stolen Generations history – national and local
- the urgency of **capturing survivor stories**, for those who wish to do so and for wider sharing
- more in-depth **data collection** (following the journey)
- accountability for **unmarked or removed graves**
- **intergenerational healing and cultural connection** for our families and communities: restoring what we’ve lost, having a safe space for youth and Elders to have yarns and to incorporate healing for all generations; ensuring we can pass survivors’ stories on to future generations





# Attachment A: Organisations

- Central Australian Aboriginal Congress
- Cherbourg Boys and Girls Dormitory Ltd
- Children of the Bomaderry Aboriginal Children’s Home Inc.
- Connecting Home Ltd
- Coota Girls Aboriginal Corporation
- Katherine Region Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation
- Kimberley Stolen Generation Aboriginal Corporation
- Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation
- Link-Up NSW
- Link-Up QLD
- Northern Territory Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation
- Nunkuwarrin Yunti of SA Inc.
- Sister Kate’s Home Kids Aboriginal Corporation
- South Australia Stolen Generation Aboriginal Corporation
- Stolen Generation Council NSW/ACT
- West Australian Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation / Yokai
- Woolkabunning Kiaka Inc. (Roelands Village)
- Yorgum Healing Service

# Attachment B: Attendees

ATTENDEES	TOTAL NUMBER
Stolen Generations Organisations	18 Plus contingent from Torres Strait
Stolen Generations Organisations delegates FULL REGISTRATION	82
Stolen Generations Organisations attendees ACTUAL ATTENDANCE	78
Delegate children	3
THF Board	4
THF YRG	5
THF SGRG	7
THF Staff	20
Total Number	117
Speakers/Facilitators/ Other	10

Attachment C: Program

<



# Attachment D: Media release

## Media Release

6 September 2024

### **Prioritise Stolen Generations survivors before it's too late, a collective call for action from a national gathering**

Over 100 people from Stolen Generations organisations, including Stolen Generations survivors, came together in Garramilla (Darwin) this week to connect and create collective knowledge on the work being done across Australia to support ageing Stolen Generations survivors.

The group of 19 organisations reaffirmed its commitment to the *Bringing them home* report recommendations, and called on governments, churches and NGOs to respond to the unfinished business of *Bringing them home*.

"This is the first time that this group of organisations dedicated to supporting Stolen Generations survivors has come together like this," said Professor Steve Larkin, Chair of The Healing Foundation board.

"All Stolen Generations survivors are now aged over 50, where access to the right care as they age is crucial. Our current aged care system is not fit for purpose and risks retraumatising many and denying them a quality of life they are not only entitled to but deserve."

"We all committed to galvanising as a sector to bring together knowledge from across the country and hold governments and institutions to account. We have no time to waste, we can't lose anymore survivors before they see justice," said CEO of The Healing Foundation Shannan Dodson.

Together the collective called for:

- Adequate and sustainable funding for Stolen Generations organisations to continue to provide services and support to survivors, their families and communities.
- The continuation of the important truth telling process Stolen Generations and the *Bringing them home* report commenced, until all Australians know the truth and reparations have been made.
- The collective and intergenerational nature of our healing is recognised. Our young people must be at the centre of all we do, we can only be healed when our families and communities are strong in their culture and identity.

Our gratitude to the Larrakia People for welcoming us to their lands for this important occasion and for keeping us safe and supported. We pay respects to their Stolen Children, and all the Stolen Generations whose voices and advocacy we carry with us.

Ends.

Learn more about The Healing Foundation.  
**Photos are also available upon request.**

**Media contact: Raina Hunter – 0402 145 820 or [raina.hunter@healingfoundation.org.au](mailto:raina.hunter@healingfoundation.org.au) and Will Cooper – 0421 648 261 or [william.cooper@healingfoundation.org.au](mailto:william.cooper@healingfoundation.org.au)**

## Additional Information:

### Quotes

*"This event has been a healing moment for a lot of people. There has been a lot of listening to what survivors and organisations are saying about our needs as we age, about the issues we are facing in accessing our records, about the funding challenges for our volunteer-run organisations."*

Aunty Jenni Caruso, Eastern Arrente woman and survivor

*"Something big is happening for our survivor organisations and for the country. Momentum is here, the fire is burning. We are organising together as a sector, to speak as one voice and push for the finalisation of the Bringing them home recommendations and to bring about the change we so desperately need."*

Raelene Rosas, CEO NT Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation



# Attachment E: Evaluation summary

Delegates were asked to complete both pre-event and post-event surveys to obtain insights and feedback about the event

23 people completed the pre-event survey / 20 completed the post-event survey

## PARTICIPANT EXPECTATIONS

What participants wanted to get out of the event (source: pre-event survey, open ended question)



Feedback from post-event survey was overwhelmingly positive with extensive praise for the opportunity to connect and collaborate.

- The anticipated outcomes were met – networking, knowledge exchange and collaboration, and sharing best practice identified as the top 3 outcomes for respondents
- Opportunities to network and collaborate received a median score of 4.54/5.
- The quality of program sessions received an average ranking of 4.57/5 and the quality of social activities had an average rank of 4.81/5.

*“This event has been a healing moment for a lot of people. There has been a lot of listening to what survivors and organisations are saying about our needs as we age, about the issues we are facing in accessing our records, about the funding challenges for our volunteer-run organisations.”* Aunty Jenni Caruso, Eastern Arrente woman and survivor



- 85% of post-event survey respondents said the event improved their understanding of The Healing Foundation's work.
- 85% of respondents said they are very likely to attend future event and 10% said likely.

*"The Gathering of Stolen Generations people/organisations is really important and by having a Gathering like this was great to network and share stories and voices from those that don't have that opportunity. This is a Sector that needs to be heard on a regular basis and should be prioritised as we are loosing our Survivors."*

*"The event was a great immersion in key issues facing Stolen Generations survivors and their families, that was so humbling. I thought the event was extremely well planned and organised. The connections and networks developed were really valuable. Also it was a highlight to have Mick Dodson in that panel discussion and also have the Minister drop in."*

**WHAT DID YOU MOST LIKE ABOUT THE EVENT?**

*"The time spent with everyone, and the thoughtful care put into every aspect of organising."*

*"There was so much to love. The program was excellent, the choice of activities and opportunity to hear so many people speak. It was very well supported with staff at the airport, hotel and Gathering venue. The wellbeing space was so well thought out and very inviting."*

*"Well organised, safe place for people to share their truths."*

*"The opportunity to meet other Stolen Generations people and their descendants and to share experiences and strategies used to survive."*

*"Being able to hear some of the Stolen generation's stories was powerful. A big thank you for their sharing."*

*"The opportunity to have real discussions with other SG organisations about the real issues SG continue to face."*

*"For me the privilege of seeing and listening to Professor Mick Dodson and his daughter Shannon. It was so humbling; they have both given us hope of rebuilding and reunifying as a solid collective to continue the work he began with the "Bringing Them Home" and hold institutions to account."*

*"For me the privilege of seeing and listening to Professor Mick Dodson and his daughter Shannan. It was so humbling; they have both given us hope of rebuilding and reunifying as a solid collective to continue the work he began with the "Bringing Them Home" and hold institutions to account."*

Post-event survey respondent."







## Original artwork

### Unyielding Spirit: A Tribute to the Stolen Generations

by Mim Cole – a Gulumoerrgin (Larrakia), Wardaman, and Karajarri visual artist from Darwin, Northern Territory.

Amidst the pain and suffering endured across the lands, a story of resilience and enduring spirit emerges. The systematic removal of children from their families and communities left deep scars, but it also revealed the unyielding strength within those affected. The artwork portrays a journey marked by both hardship and healing.

In this artwork, symbols signify the experiences of the Stolen Generations, each telling a profound story. The Sorry Day flower, representing remembrance and healing, stands amongst a landscape adorned with symbols of nature and cultural significance – crabs, fish, billy goat plum, and cascara – embodying survival, thriving, and connection to heritage. Amidst the challenges, they found moments of joy and cultural connections such as swimming, fishing, hunting, and interactions with the Tiwi people.

The sun's warm hues signify hope and new horizons, while the red echoes the pain and bloodshed over land and sea. The shield and dilly bag represent their connection to their birthplace, families, and life before being taken away – a testament to their unbroken spirit.

Yet, their struggle for recognition and support persists. Frustration and resilience intermingle as they fight for acknowledgment, representation, and resources. The displacement and tireless efforts to secure funding and educational resources have been an endless battle.

The transition to adulthood brought its own challenges – once turned 18, being left with no support or home led to homelessness; finding shelter in public toilets, overcrowded homes, and even within the mangroves underscored their resilience in navigating these turbulent waters. Beyond this, their dedication to preserving history and culture for future generations shines through as they work to create training resource kits and continue to advocate for curriculum inclusion.

The diverse symbols and colours that cover the landscape honour the complexity of their story and the many stories that may have never been told. The symbols also represent the unconditional love and presence of their ancestors that never left their sides.

**Mim Cole**



[healingfoundation.org.au](https://healingfoundation.org.au)

 @HealingFoundation

 @healingourway

 healingfoundation

 the-healing-foundation

All photos courtesy of Tiffany Parker.  
November 2024