Healing Foundation

Strong Spirit • Strong Culture • Strong People
Our Journey to Healing
Harnessing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Knowledge Systems – creating pathways to healing.

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WHO WE ARE

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation is an independent Indigenous organisation with a focus on healing our community.
OUR PURPOSE

Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:

• To heal from the wounds of past government policies and practices
• To connect to our culture and spirit
HEALING IS

- Cultural knowledge and Identity are central to locating self and creating healing
- Involves application of existing cultural knowledge in a contemporary context
- Addresses trauma stemming from colonisation
- Restores and sustains holistic wellbeing
- Creates change for individuals, families and communities
PRIORITIES

• Developing the story of healing
• Raising the profile
• Building leadership and the capacity
• Defining what healing means
• Acknowledging the intergenerational impact of trauma
• Privileging Indigenous knowledge systems
REINSTATING AND RECONNECTING TO CULTURAL VALUE SYSTEMS

• Enables communities to locate solutions to challenges within long held knowledge, wisdom and values
• Ensures responses are driven from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldview
• In the absence of this, communities will continue to struggle with challenges and justice, corrections and welfare will remain the primary responses
ELEMENTS OF QUALITY HEALING PROGRAMS

- Developed to address local issues in community
- Driven by local leadership
- Have a developed theory and evidence base
- Combine Indigenous and Western healing methodologies
- Build individual, family and community capacity
- Understand impact of colonisation and inter-generational trauma
- Proactive rather than reactive
- Incorporate strong evaluation frameworks
Trauma education and healing

- The Healing Foundation funded 62 projects in trauma education
- Projects include both community education and workforce development
- Understanding trauma within a safe cultural space can lead participants on a healing journey
Projects by approach

- Individual one-on-one approaches
- Group activities
- Both Individual & Group Activities
Healing is a collective process

• Projects overwhelmingly favour group-based approaches to trauma education in their peer groups and community
• The experience of trauma in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is a collective as well as personal experience
• Understanding trauma as a collective experience enables participants to situate their own experience within the context of community
• Qualitative analysis shows us that the peer support aspect of collective approaches is an important source of strength for participants
National Outcomes and Indicators

• National Outcome 1, increased knowledge of the impacts of trauma
  - 79% of participants reported an increased knowledge of trauma

• National Outcome 2, increased capacity to manage the impacts of trauma constructively
  - 73% of participants reported they can now better manage the impacts of trauma
National Outcomes and Indicators

- National Outcome 3, increased knowledge of support services available to assist participants

The percentage of participants that report increased use of support services in their community

60%
National Outcomes and Indicators

Participants who reported increased knowledge of how to intervene when working with trauma

Participants who reported increased confidence in relation to their work overall

Participants who reported increased ability to respond to trauma

Participants who reported increased ability to recognise the impacts of trauma

82% 88% 80% 87%
Creating trauma-informed workplaces

The evidence from this evaluation is strong that these projects have:
- increased knowledge of how to intervene when working with trauma
- increased confidence
- increased their ability to respond to trauma
- increased their ability to recognise the impacts of trauma.
This is suggestive of a trauma informed workforce being built.

Workplaces are more culturally safe and aware of the historical and intergenerational nature of trauma.

The impacts of this change in workplaces for individuals, service provision, families and communities are evidenced in the data. There are changes that are substantive and sustainable.”

– Social Compass 2014
Key Emerging Themes

- Changes to Self & Relationships
- Collaborative Relationships
- Employment and Economic Engagement
- Trauma management and coping skills (families)
- Trauma management and coping skills (individuals)
- Violence & Community Safety

Key Themes Identified
What does this tell us?

• Understanding trauma can have a powerful impact on individuals and their families
• Trauma in Aboriginal and Torres Islander communities is both a collective and an individual experience, and addressing trauma collectively can enable healing on the individual level to follow
• Understanding trauma can enable participants to better engage educational and employment opportunities
• Understanding trauma can enable communities, families and individuals to address the issue of violence
Healing is a collective process

“ It is clear that trauma is still an emerging concept within Indigenous communities. Indigenous people and communities have understood the impacts of colonisation, forced removals, and other past government policies as traumatic. However, in nearly every case, program participants across the five programs acknowledged that the depths of trauma have not been well understood—individually or collectively ...

There is a sense that Indigenous people(s) have known the existence of trauma but have not been able to fully apprehend the levels and degree of trauma and how such trauma is being played out in the details of their lives, their homes, their communities, and their workplaces.”
– Social Compass 2014
Cultural Load

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who work in the government or industry do not leave their Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander identity and culture at the door when they go to work.

• Indigenous workers bring a ‘cultural load’ – “a sense of the accumulation of factors/trauma that builds over time and cause [stress, to daily living and working”

• This concept recognises the high frequency of events that range from sad through to traumatic in Indigenous people, from family bereavements, to incarceration of relatives and community members, to acts of violence, racism and discrimination.

• Each event adds to the 'load' and can result in a burden that is carried into the workplace, increasing their susceptibility to stress, anger, and burnout.
HEALING INFORMED ORGANISATIONS

Developing a healing orientated system

The discipline to stick to clearly defined policies and procedures

Procedures and Policies that reflect the org values

Good Leadership at management and governance level