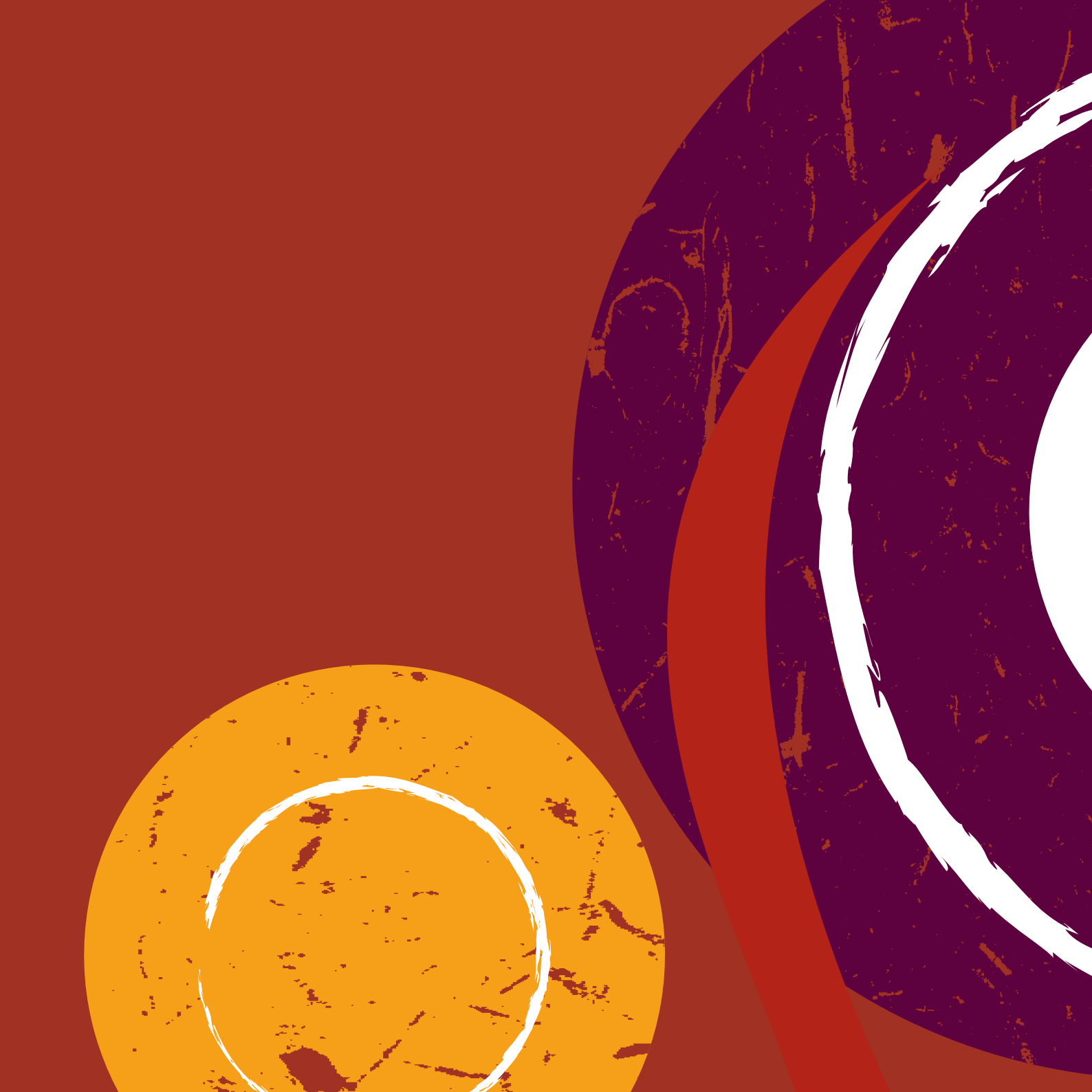




## MAPU YAAN GURRI, MAPU MARRUNGIRR HEALING OUR WAY

UNIVERSITY OF NSW, SYDNEY ON 23 JULY 2014



# CONTENTS

Executive Summary	4
Introduction	8
Aboriginal Perspectives on Healing	12
Why is Healing Needed?	16
Strategies to Support Healing	20
The NSW Government's Role in Healing.	26
Acknowledgements	32
Appendices	
1 Participating Organisations	36
2. The Healing Forum Program	43
3. Keynote Speakers and Panelists	44

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## HEALING OUR WAY – First State-wide Aboriginal Healing Forum in NSW

NSW is the first state in Australia to incorporate healing into its Aboriginal affairs policy – OCHRE, the NSW Government's plan for Aboriginal affairs. Healing is a complex and sensitive issue that requires thoughtful and considered discussion.

OCHRE recognises the importance of healing and commits the NSW Government to ongoing changes in its relationship with Aboriginal communities to achieve improvements in Aboriginal people's social, economic, cultural and emotional wellbeing.

***Mapu Yaan Gurri, Mapu Marrunggirr – Healing Our Way*** [The Healing Forum] held on 23 July 2014, was the first step towards understanding an appropriate role for government in healing. The NSW Government co-ordinated the event in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation. It was the first time a conversation about healing has been initiated with Aboriginal people on a state-wide basis.

The Healing Forum brought together more than 200 delegates, representing 68 organisations, as well as Aboriginal leaders, to share experience and understanding of trauma and healing in Aboriginal communities. This was not an academic discussion, rather the Healing Forum encouraged broad and open discussion with Aboriginal community members and service providers involved in trauma and healing practices on a daily basis. The Healing Forum also explored ways to incorporate healing and trauma informed responses into government policies and practice. The event involved speakers from a range of organisations and showcased successful healing projects and activities already occurring in community. A full list of participating organisations is listed at Appendix 1.

The Healing Forum discussion was focused around four themes which are outlined in this report:

1. Aboriginal perspectives on healing
2. Why healing is needed – issues that impact on healing
3. Strategies that support healing
4. Role for government in healing

The Healing Forum participants agreed that healing is a complex and sensitive issue that holds different meanings for individuals or communities. The Healing Forum recognised that healing is part of strong Aboriginal culture and tradition. Reconnecting with culture involves: building respect and pride; and connecting to language, lore and Country – as individuals, as families and as communities. Healing also involves restoring balance and harmony in spirit and caring at an individual, family and community level.



James Smith



Healing requires authentic leadership to overcome trauma and for recovery. Healing is a life long journey. The NSW Government's acknowledgement that trauma has impacted on Aboriginal communities was a significant first step and generated much goodwill amongst the participants. This acknowledgement helped the discussion to move from an understanding of Aboriginal perspectives on healing towards action that government policy and program delivery could incorporate to assist healing.

The Healing Forum participants, when using the term 'government' did not distinguish between State, Commonwealth or Local Government, or between the respective responsibilities of the three levels of government.

This report highlights the issues raised from the Healing Forum. This report highlights Aboriginal perspectives expressed at the Healing Forum, to inform the ongoing dialogue on trauma, healing and future government policies and programs.

### **KEY DIRECTIONS HIGHLIGHTED FOR NSW GOVERNMENT BY THE HEALING FORUM PARTICIPANTS WERE:**

1. Healing must be led by Aboriginal people – individuals, communities and Aboriginal organisations – *“healing has to be driven by Aboriginal people, we don't want another government plan or intervention about healing.”*
2. Government has a role to continue to acknowledge, respect and support healing. This means respecting the relationship with Aboriginal people and valuing the process of healing.
3. Develop a framework for healing – in partnership with Aboriginal people and communities, which
  - a) outlines government's understanding of what healing is and how government can support healing;
  - b) enables healing to be integrated into government policies and practices;
  - c) guides investment in Aboriginal people and communities to achieve healing outcomes; and
  - d) builds cultural competency within government agencies.
4. Following on from the Healing Forum government should support the holding of local forums held by Aboriginal communities, which would enable local communities to determine their own priorities and ways of healing. The dialogue needs to continue, and be driven by Aboriginal people and by local communities.

***The significance of the healing forum today is an acknowledgement by government that healing needs to take place, that trauma has been impacted on aboriginal communities and this is our opportunity to listen and to learn.***

***The Hon Victor Dominello MP, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs***



*Participants at the healing forum  
planted healing leaves to demonstrate  
their commitment to healing*



# INTRODUCTION

## BACKGROUND

*OCHRE* – the NSW Government's plan for Aboriginal affairs – aims to achieve positive generational change by creating new opportunities through education, employment, accountability and economic development. *OCHRE* recognises that Aboriginal communities best understand their own needs. *OCHRE* stands for Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility and Empowerment and is symbolic of Aboriginal communities' deep connection with Country.

*OCHRE* was informed by extensive community consultations undertaken by the Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs that highlighted the importance of healing to Aboriginal people and communities. *OCHRE* acknowledges that past Government policies and practices impacted on Aboriginal people in ways that disconnected people from their culture and traumatised individuals, families and communities.

***OCHRE commits the NSW Government to work with Aboriginal communities, policy practitioners and service providers to advance the dialogue about trauma and healing, and to begin developing responses informed by evidence of good practice.***

The Healing Forum participants acknowledged that 'we haven't seen healing included in a high level government policy before *OCHRE* – it's important that we make that commitment real'.

The Healing Forum affirms the NSW Government's commitment to advancing the dialogue on healing and trauma.

## ABOUT THE HEALING FORUM – HEALING OUR WAY

The Healing Forum was jointly presented by Aboriginal Affairs NSW and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation. The Healing Forum brought together more than 200 delegates, representing 68 organisations and Aboriginal leaders to share experience and understanding of trauma and healing in Aboriginal communities.

The Healing Forum engaged policy makers and influencers – people able to make decisions or influence the way their organisation thinks about and responds to healing. It was promoted widely through the networks of the Healing Forum partners and reference group. Other organisations and community members who weren't able to attend were encouraged to forward their comments through the Healing Forum's on-line survey, so their views could also be included in the outcomes from the forum.

The event was facilitated by Grant Sarra, a highly skilled Aboriginal facilitator, and involved experienced keynote speakers and panel members.



A culturally respectful and safe space was created for the discussion to occur. The Healing Forum's program – developed in conjunction with key stakeholders and the Forum reference group – ensured discussions could authentically examine complex and sensitive issues and achieve constructive discussion within the limited timeframe for a one day event.

Rather than focusing on problems or blame, the Healing Forum emphasised healing as a solution and catalyst for renewal and change and enabled a genuine opportunity to better understand healing.

The Healing Foundation presented a common language to support discussion and to explain the concepts of healing – Strong Spirit – Strong Culture – Strong People. The Healing Forum built on current and emerging work. It heard from Aboriginal people who are experienced dealing with trauma and working on healing activities and programs in Aboriginal communities. The discussion showcased some of the successful healing work already occurring in communities across NSW.



The name of the healing forum speaks in language about healing for all Aboriginal people, so that each and every Aboriginal person can become well and happy.

The key message 'Healing Our Way' was suggested and endorsed by "The Coota Girls" and "The Kinchela Boys".

Mapu Yaan Gurri, Mapu Marrunggirr in the language of the Thangatti people from the mid north coast of New South Wales, was provided by Ray Kelly Snr, NSW Centre for Aboriginal Language Co-ordination and Development

## EFFECTIVE ELEMENTS

How the Healing Forum facilitated an effective discussion and advanced the dialogue on healing

### CARING

- Understanding healing is a journey, an individual process – not an outcome.
- Focus on healing as a catalyst for change – forum is valued as part of a healing process.
- Not an academic discussion – participants bring real experience and understanding, dealing with trauma in Aboriginal communities and healing.
- Discussion leaders model authentic perspectives on healing.

### COMMUNITY

- Advanced the dialogue with opportunities to understand healing.
- Brought people together to share their experience.
- Communities identified priority issues.
- Participants have real experience and understanding – dealing with trauma and healing in Aboriginal communities.

### COMMITMENT

- To change and to build respectful relationships.
- To respect Aboriginal leadership on healing.
- To engage policy and decision makers – people who are able to influence the way their organisation thinks about and responds to healing.
- To influence positive actions and strategies to support healing.

### CULTURE

- Healing requires a cultural, safe space and support, to enable an open and constructive discussion dealing with sensitive issues.
- Independent Aboriginal facilitators, who understand healing and are experienced and skilled to facilitate discussions.
- Authentic discussions are key to healing.
- A common language is important to understand healing – Strong Spirit – Strong Culture – Strong People (Healing Foundation).

EFFECTIVE ELEMENTS DEMONSTRATED IN THE HEALING FORUM



*Healing is... “Changing the way we think, feel and behave toward each other as people to become better human beings but make sure we have the dignity and the integrity to know what this means,”*

*Grant Sarra – Healing Forum Facilitator*

# ABORIGINAL PERSPECTIVES ON HEALING

Healing Forum participants recognised that healing is not easy but to move forward Aboriginal people and the broader community need a shared understanding of what healing means.

## HEALING FORUM PARTICIPANTS SPOKE ABOUT WHAT HEALING MEANS TO THEM.....

**Spirit** is the very core of who we are as Aboriginal people.

Spirit has always been there, it has never left us. Healing involves restoring balance and harmony – when our mind, body and spirit come together as one.

**Healing helps us to reconnect to our identity, our relationships, our land and our spirit.**

Healing creates change, deals with trauma and tells the truth of our stories. We need to reconnect and understand how we are connected – our identity, our Country, our culture, our ancestors, and our spirit. Reconnecting takes us forward into the future, the stolen generations and their families, young ones, elders, mothers and fathers.

The opportunity to **tell your own story and to be listened to** is an important part of the healing process, it enables us to recognise and deal with issues one by one.

**Destroying culture destroys lives. Culture is key to healing.**

We need a focus on understanding our culture, our cultural knowledge, and our languages. Healing has been part of our culture for thousands of years, the oldest living culture in the world. Our culture is the answer – we have tools within. Cultural wounds need cultural medicine.

Healing involves respecting, promoting and supporting Aboriginal culture and language, and recognising Aboriginal peoples' cultural identity, living culture, cultural connections and cultural heritage.

**Just imagine every Aboriginal person looking within themselves and working within themselves – that healing will bring back pride and dignity and who we are.**

There is not just one way to heal. We are all individuals and we are all different. It is a journey to understand yourself, re-build your confidence, to be well and strong enough to make changes, empower yourself and to gain leadership qualities.

We need Aboriginal people to be champions, strong leaders presenting positive images of Aboriginal people, telling our success stories and building pride in our culture. Everyone is a role model and a healer, for themselves and their own family.

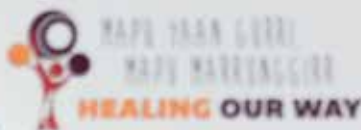
Healing is multi-faceted and different families and communities will have different needs. **The process of healing must be valued and trusted.**





## OCHRE HEALING FORUM

23RD JULY 2014 URSW AUSTRALIA



*It's hard to explain what happened to us at Kinchella Boys Home. We had a number. You are a number, you're number 28' they said.*

*We are brothers, we have to save each other*

*We're here to recognise each other as Aboriginal people and to recognise the names our mothers and fathers gave us...The truth has got to come out. We're up here fighting for our people. We're still a strong people. What we're doing up here has made our selves proud."*

*Uncle Manuel Ebsworth,  
Chairperson Kinchella Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation*

*Uncle Cecil Bowden and Uncle Manuel Ebsworth*

**We need to be treating each other with respect. Sharing, caring and respect.**

Healing begins with us respecting ourselves. We have been hurt and traumatised, and we keep hurting each other. It's time to turn it around to start nurturing, loving ourselves and loving our families. Healing involves committing to wellbeing, and facing often difficult and confronting issues and not avoiding them or the causes of behaviours/problems. 'You have to heal yourself before you can work with others on healing'.

**It is absolutely crucial that our mob has ownership and leadership on healing.**

Healing begins with us individually, making a decision about how we will address healing in our own lives so we can then influence others be they friends or family or community. Healing also means we need to forgive people that we don't necessarily really want to forgive.

Healing has to be led by Aboriginal people. Healing related projects must be designed, developed and delivered by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people.

Healing takes time and commitment from individuals, families and communities, and is a life long journey.

Aboriginal Community Controlled organisations are key in the healing process and we need to acknowledge and support them in the way they work and to get healing out to the wider community.

**Trauma is long lasting – it can impact for a lifetime and carry forward from one generation to the next.**

Firstly we have to heal ourselves before we can heal communities. Then come together as a united front to sort out what we want for healing – recognition of Aboriginal people, connection to culture and country, trauma responses and trauma informed services for Aboriginal people.

**We need healing to overcome intergenerational trauma – from colonisation, assimilation, the destruction of culture, forced removal of children, incarceration, institutionalisation and racism.**

Government programs and services will not be able to overcome disadvantage without healing.

Governments and service providers must listen and learn from Aboriginal people to effectively support healing. Participants valued the Healing Forum as the first step in starting this dialogue.



## OCHRE HEALING FORUM

23RD JULY 2014 UNEW AUSTRALIA

*Whatever we do with healing it's always got to be driven by the community, a particular community. Not a blanket approach that's developed in Sydney then dropped into every community across NSW but the community actually driving it all.*

*Mick Gooda, Social Justice Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission*

## WHY IS HEALING NEEDED?

Aboriginal people, communities and culture have been impacted over many generations. Government has acknowledged that devastating impact of poor historic government policies and unnecessary control over the daily lives of Aboriginal people.

The nation is on a healing journey to understand that this is our shared history and it includes the trauma of colonisation, discrimination and racism. In February 2008, the Australian Government moved to "honour the Indigenous peoples and cultures of this land" and gave a national Apology to the Stolen Generations and their descendants. The Apology was a crucial step in the healing process but The Healing Forum participants agreed that the healing journey has to involve more than apologies.

***Healing will take some time..***

***There is a prevailing sentiment that 'Government doesn't understand what was taken away and doesn't understand the hurt that is caused when it controlled aspects of Aboriginal peoples lives and families'. The traumas are long lasting and unresolved, impacting from one generation to the following generations. 'It has taken away our land, took us away from our people, and diminished and ridiculed our culture and values'.***

The Healing Forum heard from courageous presenters including survivors of the Stolen Generations. As Aboriginal children they were taken away from their communities, removed from their families and placed into institutions – into homes like Bombaderry, Kinchela Boys and Cootamundra Girls Home and suffered lifelong trauma as a result of being disconnected from their families and culture. They explained how as traumatised children and adults they moved in and out of institutions or were beaten down by racism. They had to learn to survive and live with their memories of being rejected and humiliated and many endured physical, emotional and sexual abuse throughout their lives. They are telling their stories to heal, to share their experience and to build a better life for future generations.

Social justice issues – education, housing, having a decent living – are being faced today as a result of the impact of intergenerational trauma and social disadvantage. The current removal of Aboriginal people from their families and communities – Aboriginal over-representation in incarceration rates, rates of removal of children from families, increasing suicide rates – is a pressing immediate problem and are urgent priorities for healing. The problems and symptoms manifest in anger, violence, abuse, alcohol, drugs, suicide. Participants identified that families need healing – intensive family based support before crisis point is reached – to break the cycle.





*Aunty Ali Golding,  
Elder in Residence UNSW Medicine*

Participants also acknowledged the problem of lateral violence in communities. They recognised the consequence of saying nothing about lateral violence is greater than the criticism of speaking up. Participants agreed that to move forward people need to treat each other with respect and find ways to challenge each other in respectful ways.

Participants were also concerned that services designed for Aboriginal people are not addressing the key issues. People begin to become numb – ‘it’s like being in a revolving door and they’re not getting help’. This impacts on health outcomes and there’s a genuine need for proper health plans for Aboriginal men and women.

### THE HEALING FORUM PARTICIPANTS SAID:

- Healing is critical to rebuilding relationships, identity, land and spirit.
- Culture needs to be brought back, especially to young people, and Elders need to be appreciated, cared for and respected.
- The Healing Forum should be recognised as a catalyst for sharing, caring and respecting.
- We need to respect ourselves and each other. Healing is also needed to overcome lateral violence. When we are hurting, we hurt each other.

*“For the healing journey to progress forward ..... we first need to go back and talk about the past. Healing includes the physical, the psychological, the emotional, the cultural and the spiritual. True healing occurs when there is recognition of the harm, acknowledgement of the impact now and into the future, and the restoration of choice, trust, justice, re-empowerment and hope. Healing is a journey defined and guided by the individual.”*

*Lorna McNamara – NSW Health Education Centre Against Violence*



Healing Foundation presented the Healing Forum  
in partnership with Aboriginal Affairs NSW

## STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT HEALING

Approaches to healing need to **address the underlying causes of trauma, not just the symptoms**. The Healing Forum emphasised that Aboriginal people need to lead healing and there is a key role for governments to understand, respect and recognise effective healing.

The Healing Foundation presented information about the building evidence base on effective healing activities and strategies in Australia. The presenters and participants also spoke about challenges faced by healing programs and successful healing journeys.

### HEALING APPROACHES MUST EMBED SELF-DETERMINATION

Aboriginal people have to own initiatives to achieve solutions. Government and non-government organisations have a significant impact on Aboriginal people and communities in the way they deliver services and implement policies. Government interventions into the lives of Aboriginal people are not effective or sustainable. Healing involves **local solutions being designed, led and implemented by local people**. This involves rebuilding confidence and wellbeing in the individual and their relationships.

**Effective programs** support participants through the process of dealing with trauma and their own behaviours, reconnecting with their identity, culture and spirit. Healing programs that have been specifically designed by and for Aboriginal people are being delivered by Aboriginal people, are achieving success. Aboriginal organisations are also delivering activities and programs that are needed in communities, and need support, but not to the extent they lose their self-determination and integrity.

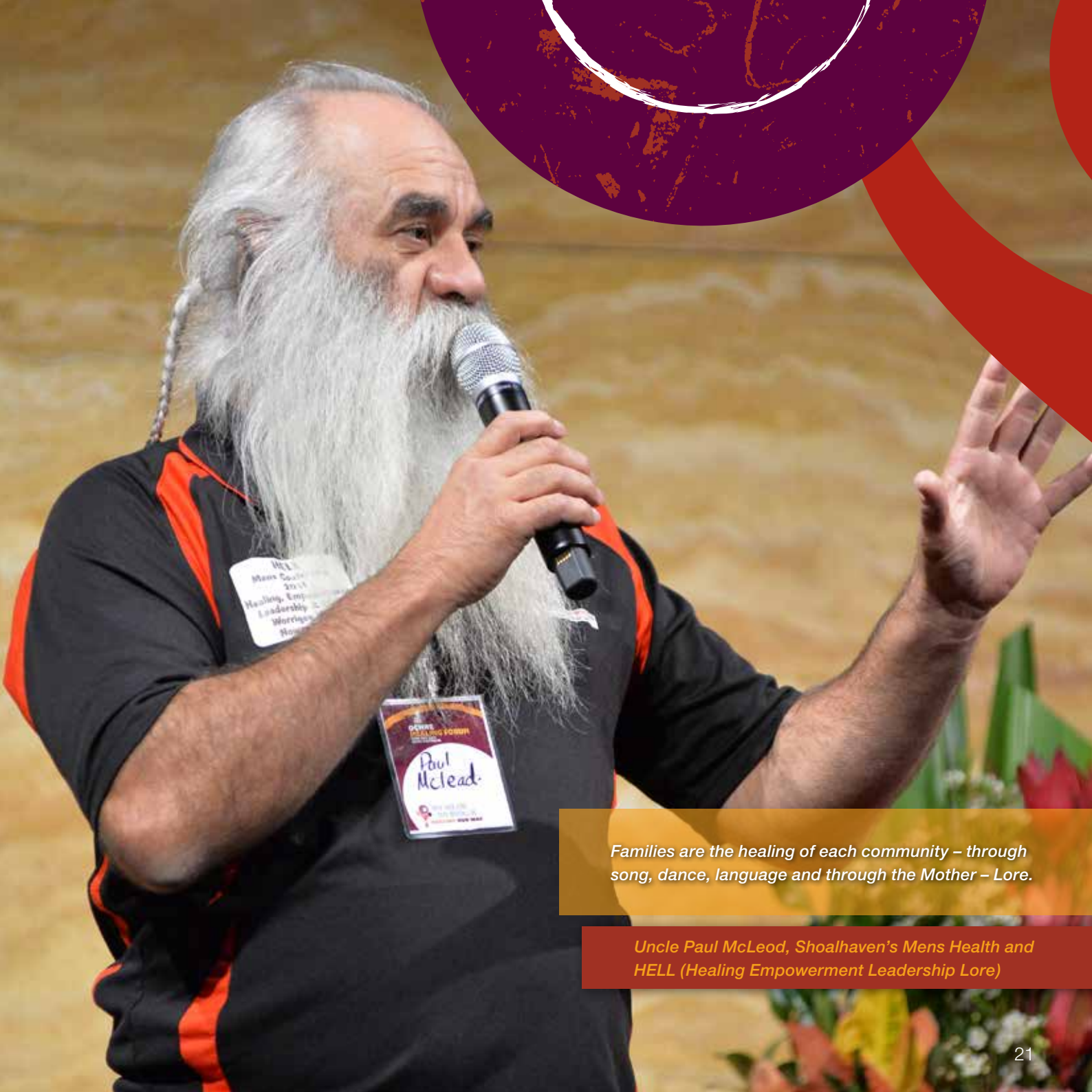
***‘Healing has to be driven by Aboriginal people, we don’t want another government plan or an intervention about healing.’***

### CONNECTING TO CULTURE IS CRITICAL TO HEALING

Healing approaches need to embed self-determination and connection to spirit and culture. ‘We need an understanding of where we came from and where we are going, passing the learning onto the next generation for a better future, connecting to who we are and who we will be’. Participants added that ‘healing involves restoring balance, harmony and spirit’ and ‘healing is a journey – we need to value the time and process required for healing’.

**Opportunities to yarn-up** are important, to identify with and speak with people about culture and community, to share experience and to help each other through difficulties. **A safe space** or retreat can help people to get things off their chest and move on with healing. Opportunities to tell and have stories listened to is an important part of healing, and a way of acknowledging and respecting memories and experience.





*Families are the healing of each community – through song, dance, language and through the Mother – Lore.*

*Uncle Paul McLeod, Shoalhaven's Mens Health and HELL (Healing Empowerment Leadership Lore)*

Opportunities to express ideas and feelings through **arts and crafts** can be empowering for individuals and groups. Cultural groups and peer groups – such as Mens' Groups and Womens' Groups – can also support healing. **Family gatherings** are also important for healing such as family reunions, returning to country, visiting cultural sites and healing circles.

Linking-up and experiencing the spiritual aspect of healing on Country is also important. **Cultural camps or events** help people to connect and to learn about culture, lore and what important issues are in their community. Opportunities to learn and carry on the traditional practices strengthen Aboriginal people, families and leadership. **Language revitalisation**, led by Aboriginal people, is also an important step to reconnect people to identity, spirit and culture. 'Our stories and songs, dances and painting up, connect us to our culture'.

The discussion identified opportunities for government and non-government organisations to engage with and support effective healing strategies.

### **CULTURAL COMPETENCY SUPPORTS HEALING**

Healing also needs to link to other services and programs so that Aboriginal people will access and receive the additional support they need for themselves and within their families. **Culturally competent counselling services** are important to help people deal with many different issues – grief, relationships, family breakdowns, trauma and mental health, as well as general health and rehabilitation. Counsellors need to be available that are respectful of culture, non-judgmental and part of a holistic approach to wellbeing.

Training and education **programs delivered by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal workers** are raising awareness and understanding about cultural competency, trauma and healing. Participants urged that this work continue in a way that supports individual workers and builds workforce capabilities to deliver better services to Aboriginal people.

### **HEALING FAMILIES FIRST – INVEST EARLY AND WHOLISTICALLY**

Effective healing programs are being run by Aboriginal facilitators for Aboriginal men and women who want to break the cycle in their own lives and within their families. Healing for Aboriginal communities begins within families.

The Aboriginal family support sector is building capacity, to support families in crisis and children at risk of harm. We need to have a greater focus on **healing families first and early**, before children are removed – 'we shouldn't be leaving people to fail'. Forum participants expressed the need to heal parents first to heal the families, but also the importance of working with the whole family so that opportunities and support can be accessed before crisis occurs.



*Evie J – Vocalist*

Healing Forum participants called for the Aboriginal child placement principles to be strengthened in practice and with cultural support, to create stronger links for children to their families and culture. Greater education about family law and adoptions was also identified as a strategy to help keep children and families connected.

### **STOLEN GENERATION SURVIVORS TELL THEIR STORIES**

The Healing Forum acknowledged how survivors of the Stolen Generations – including former residents of Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation, Cootamundra Girls and Bombaderry Childrens' Home – come together to assist each other. They are raising awareness about issues faced by the Stolen Generations and the oral histories they are recording are significant historic records. This is important so that survivors can leave a positive legacy for their families and a message for the future.

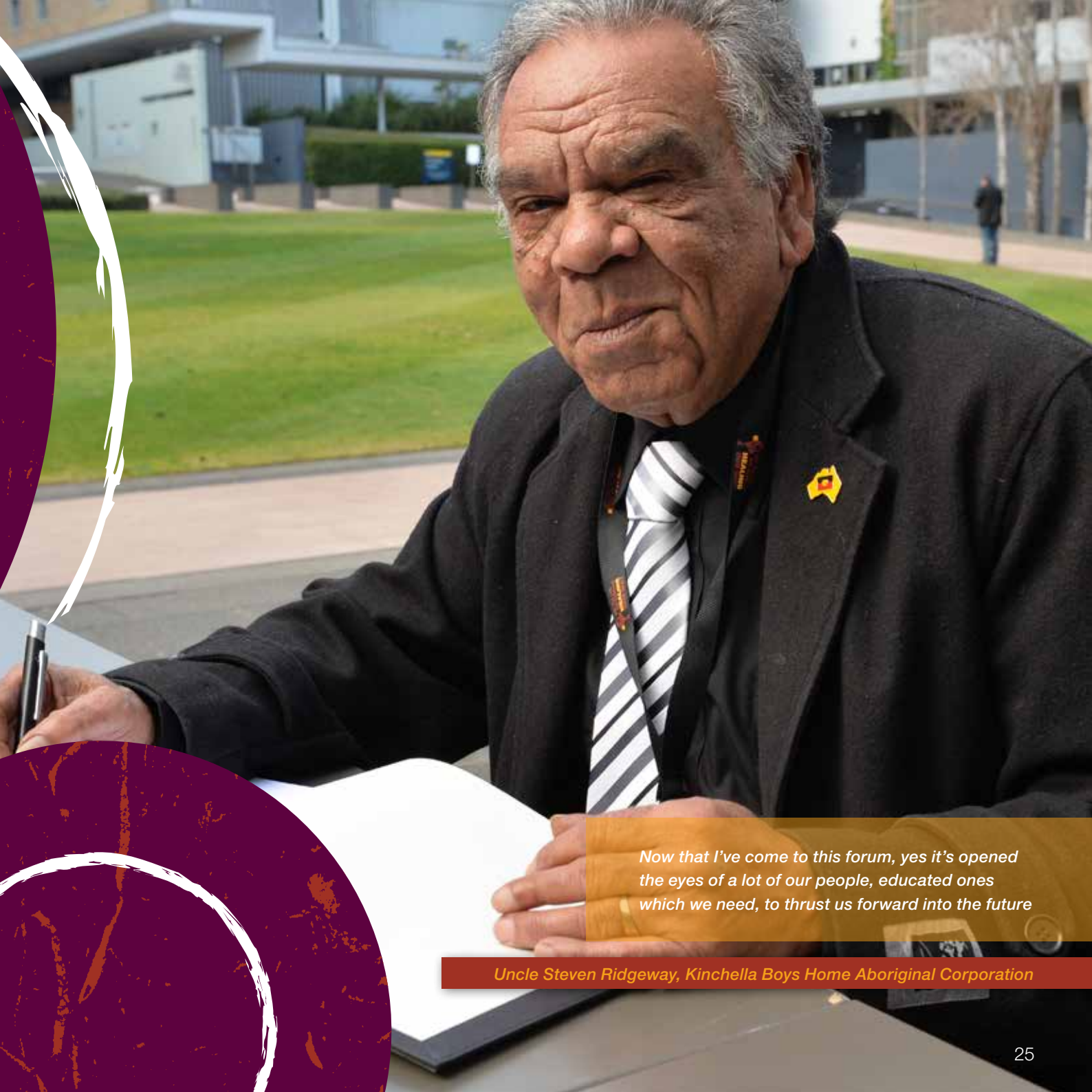
### **DIALOGUE ON HEALING SHOULD CONTINUE**

Participants identified that following on from The Healing Forum that local forums would be a positive step in continuing the dialogue. It is important that these forums be driven by local communities and facilitated by Aboriginal people and by local communities so communities can determine their own priorities and ways of healing.

*Healing is... “The English words ‘healing’ and ‘whole’ share the same history. ‘Healing’ and ‘health’ both derive from the word ‘hale’ which means wholeness; ‘hale’ comes from the ancient Proto-Indo-European word ‘kailo’ meaning whole, uninjured, of good omen. When Aboriginal people use the word ‘wholistic’ we are describing approaches where individual wellbeing is bound to the social and emotional and cultural well-being of the whole community (NAHS, 1989). Connectedness, identity, belonging, and spirituality are all part of this and at the core of Aboriginal health and wellbeing.*

*Muru Marri – University of NSW*





*Now that I've come to this forum, yes it's opened the eyes of a lot of our people, educated ones which we need, to thrust us forward into the future*

*Uncle Steven Ridgeway, Kinchella Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation*

## THE NSW GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN HEALING.

The Healing Forum participants identified that all tiers of government have a critical role to support healing but that government should not impose constraints that attempt to define, prescribe or control the healing process or healing outcomes. Areas identified for government action were:

### HEALING FRAMEWORK

**Government has a clear role to acknowledge, respect and support healing. This means respecting the relationship with Aboriginal people and valuing the process of healing.** The Healing Forum participants called for a framework for healing, which respects Aboriginal perspectives and leadership on healing and includes government's understanding of what healing is, and how government can support healing. But it is important that government takes its lead from Aboriginal communities and looks at healing from approaches that are already working at a grass roots level.

An understanding and appreciation of healing needs to be integrated into and across a range of important issues, policies and actions that are impacting on Aboriginal people. Healing extends across a range of government portfolios.

Healing approaches and services that engage with Aboriginal people must be culturally competent and trauma informed, otherwise they can cause more damage and trauma. To achieve this Aboriginal people need active involvement and responsibility for policy development and service delivery.

Aboriginal people need active involvement in and responsibility for policy development and service delivery.

Government also needs to learn and adapt to the way Aboriginal communities are living and making decisions – there needs to be a much deeper conversation about healing.

*Today is really about finding what healing means in the context of all the different Aboriginal groups across NSW and then being able to strategically develop a framework about what healing means. You heard today – suicide, incarceration rates, domestic violence, lateral violence, Mens business, Womens business, all of that. So we need to define that in a strategic planning context or a healing context and then we start looking at it in terms of project context.*

*Grant Sarra, Facilitator – Sarra Consulting*



*Healing is aiming to ... “address the underlying causes of trauma – not just treat the symptoms – with programs that revitalise language and culture and give autonomy back to Aboriginal communities.”*

*The Hon Victor Dominello MP, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs*

## INVESTMENT IN ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

**Investment in Aboriginal people and in self-determination is needed to support healing.** By understanding what healing means and the need for healing, Government can shift the way it works with Aboriginal communities to support healing by:

- Re-investment strategies that shift funding into Aboriginal communities for sustainable development to break the cycle of disadvantage.
- Investing more in Aboriginal people and Aboriginal institutions, to build their capacity and leadership.
- Aligning funding, program delivery and accountability to support healing and meet the needs of Aboriginal people. (This may mean re-directing resources to activities that traditionally don't receive regular funding).
- Recognising cultural leadership including Men's and Women's Groups.
- Ensuring services are culturally appropriate and that government employment and workforce strategies include building cultural capacity and respect.
- Bringing greater focus on healing families first and early, before children are removed.

Greater and more **effective investment in family services and support** is required at an early intervention and prevention stage. The focus and investment needs to support families before issues escalate to risk of serious harm and before children are being removed to out of home care.

There also is a role for **schools to encourage and connect with families** about healing. Some schools are already supporting local community activities. The local school is a venue for some healing groups where community members have come together to create a safe place where they have re-focused their discussions about family relationships, shared stories and cried, talked about their problems, turned to one another and re-built their confidence.

Healing approaches and **services that engage with Aboriginal people must be culturally competent and trauma informed**, otherwise they can cause more damage and trauma. Government support for healing through partnerships and funding for Aboriginal controlled organisations and programs is critical.

Government employment and workforce strategies across **all portfolios need to focus on building cultural capacity and respect**. Managers and workers need to be trained and educated to develop their skills and cultural awareness to work effectively alongside and to deliver programs and services to Aboriginal people.





*Today, it's just blown me away because it's so important to Aboriginal people in this state. Especially the Stolen Generations – where we've been trying for a lifetime, for lifetimes, generations, to have something happening.*

**Auntie Lorraine Peeters**

## UNFINISHED STOLEN GENERATIONS BUSINESS

It has been 16 years since the Inquiry into the Stolen Generations, and 6 years since the national Apology. Forum participants strongly advocated that **all the recommendations from the Bringing Them Home report need to be addressed.** This includes taking into account the psychological trauma and hurt suffered and brokering necessary service responses.

Participants called for the *Bringing Them Home* Social and Emotional Wellbeing program (which supports Aboriginal people impacted by the Stolen Generations and their families, including connecting them to services and counselling, and facilitating family reunions) to continue to be supported and expanded by the Australian Government.

## HEALING AND RECONCILIATION

An ongoing partnership with the Healing Foundation is critical to develop and support Aboriginal leadership on healing in communities across Australia. It is important to work in a way that reinforces the function and expertise developed by the Healing Foundation and links to the healing work being done in Aboriginal communities. Care will be needed to avoid duplication with existing forum and conference events that are already available for practitioners.

Government also has a role to challenge and eliminate discrimination and racism; and to promote reconciliation and build positive relationships across the broader community. This involves a significant leadership role for government to acknowledge and celebrate Aboriginal culture and achievements across the broader community.

Finally, The Healing Forum participants acknowledged that the social change involved in healing will take much time, the NSW Government commitment must be long term, multi-faceted and adaptable to change.

*Healing is... "It's hard to explain what happened to us at Kinchela Boys Home. We can't just say what happened to us. We had a number. When we grew up they told us we weren't children; we weren't human.' You are a number, you're number 28' they said. We're up here in Kempsey and Kinchela is trying to get rid of a number.*

*Uncle Manuel Ebsworth – Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation*





Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation members participated in The Healing Forum

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Healing Forum was jointly presented by Aboriginal Affairs, NSW Department of Education and Communities and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation.

The Healing Forum project team produced a unique event which enabled Aboriginal voices to be heard and to lead the discussion on these very important issues. Arrangements for the event were designed and delivered with the assistance of key stakeholders who participated in the forum reference group. The work of GJC Communication – Deadly Vibe and Grant Sarra Consultancy Services, to raise awareness about The Healing Forum and direct support during and post the event was critical to the events success.

The involvement and assistance of all The Healing Forum speakers, the members of the reference group and the many other supporters of The Healing Forum are acknowledged and greatly appreciated. The personal commitment and support of participants made The Healing Forum a safe and supportive environment to share experience and perspectives on healing. The Healing Forum would not have been possible without this dedication and personal insight.

There are many interested stakeholders involved in healing and the assistance and advice provided in our discussion prior to the forum is greatly appreciated.

*Healing is... “a way of overcoming the tendency to default to focusing in things that can’t be changed. Instead, healing enables individuals to get control over their lives and look for positive pathways.”*

*Today represents the first step towards some concrete action on healing, in government policy and program delivery. This is the first state in Australia that has included or incorporated healing into a major Aboriginal affairs policy document.*

*What our evidence shows is that culture and Aboriginal people themselves, at the core of healing projects is essential for their success. So projects must be designed, developed and delivered by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people.*

*Richard Weston, CEO Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation*





# OCHRE



*Opportunity*



*Healing*



*Choice*



*Responsibility*



*Empowerment*



## APPENDICES





## APPENDIX 1 – PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

The Healing Forum engaged with policy makers – people able to make decisions or influence the way their organisation thinks about and responds to healing.

- More than 200 delegates participated in the Healing Forum representing 68 organisations.
- Over 190 organisations were invited to nominate delegates to attend the Healing Forum (those who registered delegates are **listed in bold**).
- 6 peak Aboriginal organisations also were invited to attend and to circulate the invitation across their networks (highlighted organisations).
- 10 organisations were involved in the Reference Group that planned arrangements and support for the event in consultation with other key stakeholders (highlighted \*).

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| - <b>Aboriginal Affairs NSW *</b>   | - <b>Aging, Disability and Homecare ADHC</b>                         |
| - <b>2Women Dreaming Healing Inc</b>  | - <b>Aboriginal Health &amp; Medical Research Council – AHMRC</b>    |
| - <b>Aboriginal Disability Network</b>                                      | - <b>Australian Human Rights Commission</b>                          |
| - <b>Central Coast Medicare Local – Aboriginal Family Wellbeing Program</b> | - <b>Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience – AIME</b>           |
| - <b>Aboriginal Legal Service</b>   | - <b>Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service</b>                    |
| - <b>Aboriginal Disability Advocate</b>                                     | - <b>Anglicare</b>   |
| - <b>Aboriginal, Child and Community Care State Secretariat</b>             | - AnTAR – National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Island Rights Advocacy |
| - Aboriginal Housing Office   | - <b>Anti Discrimination Board NSW</b>                               |
| - AECG – Aboriginal Education Consultation Group NSW Inc                    | - <b>Arts NSW</b>  |





- Attorney Generals NSW
- Australian Museum
- Badanami (University of Western Sydney)
- Barnardos Australia
- Benevolent Society
- Bennelong Haven
- Blackdog Institute
- Bunjum Aboriginal Co-operative Limited
- Buttery Limited
- **Central Coast Medicare Local – Aboriginal Family Wellbeing Program**
- **Centre for Aboriginal Language Coordination & Development**
- **Children’s Court of NSW**
- Connected Communities – Department of Education
- **Cootamundra Aboriginal Girl’s Home Corporation \***
- Corrective Services NSW
- **DADWC – Dads Aware Dads Who Care**
- **Department of Education and Communities**
- **Department of Health**
- **Department of Human Services**
- Department of Local Government
- Department of Planning and Environment
- **Department of Premier and Cabinet**
- **Department of Premier and Cabinet – Localisation and Community Services**
- **Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet**
- **Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet – Indigenous Affairs Group**
- Prime Ministers Indigenous Advisory Council
- **Department of Social Services**
- Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services
- **Dharrawuli Gabanmali Aboriginal Corporation**
- **Education Centre Against Violence – ECAV \***
- **Eleanor Duncan Aboriginal Medical Centre**
- **Office of Environment & Heritage**
- **Family and Community Services, Department of FACS – Aboriginal Services**
- **FACS – Community Services**
- Family Action Centre University of Newcastle
- **Family Worker Training and Development Programme**
- Federal Circuit Court of Australia



- 38



- **Mental Health Commission of NSW**
- Mingeletta Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation
- Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs – CAPO
- Ministry for Police and Emergency Services
- Mission Australia
- **Mudgin-Gal Aboriginal Corporation**
- Murrung-ta Indigenous Training
- NACCHO – National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations
- Namatjira Haven
- **National Association for Loss & Grief (NSW) Inc. (NALAG)**
- National ATSI Health Workers Association
- **National Disability Services**
- **NSW Health**
- **NSW Health – Centre for Aboriginal Health \***
- **NSW Health – Centre for Oral Health Strategy**
- **NSW Health – Centre for Epidemiology & Evidence**
- **NSW Health – Centre for Population Health**
- **NSW Health – NSW Kids and Families**
- **NSW Health – Nursing & Midwifery**
- National Stolen Generations Alliance
- National Congress of Australia's First Peoples
- National Centre of Indigenous Excellence – NCIE
- Newcastle University
- Ngurra Bu Aboriginal Corporation
- NSW Fair Trading
- NSW Ministry of Health
- NSW Ministry of Health, Strategy & Resources Division
- NSW Ombudsman
- **NSW Police**
- **NSW Police – Child Assault State Command**
- **NSW Police – JIRT**
- **NSW Reconciliation Council \***
- NSW Aboriginal Land Council – NSWALC
- OATSIH – Office for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Health, Department of Health & Ageing
- **Office of Local Government**
- Office of NSW State Coroner
- Office of the Chief Health Officer
- **Public Service Commission NSW**
- Planning NSW
- Powerhouse Museum
- **Price Waterhouse Coopers**
- Prime Ministers Indigenous Advisory Council



- **Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia**

- Red Cross
- Red Dust Healing
- Relationships Australia

- **Rekindling the Spirit**

- Royal Commission Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
- South Coast Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation – SCMSAC
- Services NSW
- Shoalhaven ACSA LARG
- SNAICC – Secretariat National Aboriginal & Islander Child Care
- Southern Cross University
- Spirit Dreaming
- Sport and Recreation NSW
- St Vincent De Paul
- State Records Authority of NSW

- **Stolen Generation Council NSW & ACT**

- Strategy & Resources Division, MoH
- Sydney Childrens Hospital Network
- Sydney Living Museums
- **Sydney Region Aboriginal Corporation**

- Sydney University

- **TAFE NSW – Outreach**

- The Glen
- The Smith Family
- The Wollotuka Institute (Newcastle University)
- Tranby Aboriginal College
- Transport for NSW

- **Treasury NSW**

- Tribal Warrior

- **Uniting Care CYPF – Jaanimili**

- **Uniting Care, Burnside**

- **University NSW – UNSW**

- **UNSW – Muru Marri \***

- Urban Growth
- UTS Indigenous Research Unit

- **Vibe Communications \***

- **Warra Warra Aboriginal Legal Service**

- **Wayside Chapel**

- We Al-li – Southern Cross University
- Weave Youth and Community Services Ltd
- Wesley Mission

- **Winangali Marumali**

- Youth Advisory Council – Youth NSW
- **Youth Off the Streets**







## APPENDIX 2. THE HEALING FORUM PROGRAM

### PANEL DISCUSSION – 1

The Truth about Healing

- Understanding Healing – why we need Healing to address trauma
- Recognising the causes and symptoms of trauma -overcoming intergenerational trauma and racism
- Different pathways to healing – for the individual, family and communities
- The best of intentions – what impact does Government have today on Aboriginal people and healing?
- Self determination and healing – survivors and collective healing
- Presentations – Stolen Generation

### PANEL DISCUSSION – 2

Understanding Aboriginal perspectives on healing – restoring balance and harmony.

- What's happening – some successful journeys in NSW
- Why Healing is needed – what are the key elements in Healing?
- What does Healing mean for Aboriginal people and communities – is it different for individuals, families, communities?
- What does healing encompass – are there different ways to heal?
- Healing and solutions based thinking
- Presentations – Aboriginal leadership – healing programs



### PANEL DISCUSSION – 3

Developing a Policy Perspective – enabling healing

- Does government understand healing?
- Is there an appropriate role for government in Healing?
- Influencing policy and performance – how do we engage government and non-government sectors to embrace healing and to take a different direction
- How can government respect and support Healing at funding, policy and performance levels?
- Services that are tailored to meet the needs of Aboriginal people and communities – are we addressing the symptoms or causes of trauma or supporting healing.
- Presentations- including the Healing Foundation and the NSW Mental Health Commission

### PANEL DISCUSSION – 4

Making the healing in our OCHRE plan real – an authentic response

- Recognising and investing in healing – community leaders and culture.
- Supporting culture and healing in the way we do business
- Respecting cultural connections and renewal – healing from loss of culture and identity
- Measuring outcomes – valuing the healing process



## APPENDIX 3. KEYNOTE SPEAKERS AND PANELISTS



### GRANT SARRA

#### **Grant Sarra Consultancy Services EVENT FACILITATOR**

Grant Sarra has worked for the past 34 years in areas that deal exclusively with Indigenous community problems, issues and aspirations relevant to the public and private sector. Grant is an experienced (but not expert) Indigenous executive, change agent, trainer, workshop facilitator and project manager.

He runs his own business, Grant Sarra Consultancy Services in Brisbane and was nominated in 2000 for the National Human Rights Medal for his development of the Strategic Indigenous Awareness Program.



### MICK GOODA

#### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner KEYNOTE SPEAKER**

Mick Gooda is a descendent of the Gangulu people of central Queensland. He is a senior executive with 25 years' experience and a record of attaining high-level goals and leading multi- million dollar service programs and organisational reform.

Immediately prior to taking up the position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Mick was the Chief Executive Officer of the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health (CRAH) for five and a half years.

Mick has been actively involved in advocacy in Indigenous affairs and has played a leadership role in a range of areas including: Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and Senior Consultant to the Aboriginal Legal Service (WA).





## **RICHARD WESTON**

### **CEO Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation KEYNOTE SPEAKER**

Richard Weston, descended from the Meriam (Murray Island) people of the Torres Strait, is CEO of the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation. Richard has led the Healing Foundation through its early years to establish it on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs landscape. The Healing Foundation has helped catalyse the healing movement across Australia through the funding of over 90 projects delivering 1675 healing activities to over 16,000 Indigenous people. These projects have so far employed over 730 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Between 2000 and 2009 Richard was CEO of the Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation.

*When it comes to the indigenous community we're trying to undo a lifetime of issues that are impacting on one another that our parents felt, their grandparents felt and it just keeps going back. Here we are today we're in a different era but it's thinking about what we're doing today and what we can set up for tomorrow. For me the biggest thing, we can call it healing or trauma or whatever, it's about breaking the cycle.*

*I don't think it's fair to keep breeding generations of children that are coming into a world where they are being treated unjustly.*

*Greg Telford, Rekindling the Spirit*



## **AUNTY LORRAINE PEETERS**

### **Managing Director & Facilitator, Marumali KEYNOTE SPEAKER**

Wailwan-Gamilaroi-Bidgera woman Aunty Lorraine Peeters has devoted many years of her life to supporting Aboriginal people heal from past and present traumas and helping others understand the unique experiences of Stolen Generations.

During childhood, like many other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, Aunty Lorraine was forcibly removed and separated from her home and family at the age of four and placed in an institution. Through her healing journey and involvement with others, Aunty Lorraine developed a model of healing. She went on, in collaboration with others, to develop the Marumali Program that is an accredited training program aimed to increase the quality of support available to Stolen Generations. Since 2000 the Marumali Program has been delivered to Bringing Them Home counsellors, Link-Up workers, social and emotional wellbeing workers, health staff and mental health practitioners.

Aunty Lorraine played an active advocacy role in the lead-up to the National Apology. She was NSW Senior Australian of the Year in 2009, and in 2011 she was co-winner of the World Council for Psychotherapy – Sigmund Freud Award and in 2012 won the Deadly Award for Lifetime Contribution Achievement Award for Healing the Stolen Generations.

### **Rekindling the Spirit, Managing Director KEYNOTE SPEAKER**



Greg Telford is Managing Director of Rekindling the Spirit, a Lismore based, Bandjalung Nation, community organisation run by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal families in Australia. Rekindling the Spirit supports Indigenous men and women to find their own path to empowerment through spiritual, emotional, sexual and physical healing.

Rekindling the Spirit was a project that Greg started in 1996 to help other Indigenous men to tackle their own issues with violence.



## CONNECTING TO CULTURE

### Uncle Allen Madden

Uncle Allen John Madden has been on the board of Sydney Foreshore Authority, the Central Coast Aboriginal Heritage and SBS. He is presently a board member of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council. He is a married man with 10 children, a Gadigal Elder and Business owner of Aboriginal Land Consultancy which promotes WTC, Site Surveys and Aboriginal Tours. Uncle is a life member of the Redfern All Blacks.



### Aunty Ali Golding

Aunty Ali is a Biripi woman who grew up on the Taree Mission in NSW. She took up study at Nungalinga College Darwin and graduated with a Diploma of Theology. In 2010 she was awarded the National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Elder of the Year (Female). Aunty Ali Golding is now the UNSW Medicine's Elder in Residence, where she supports medical students generally and in the training of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors specifically.



### Ray Kelly Snr

Ray was born and raised in Armidale NSW and is of Thangarri and Gummayirra Heritage. He has been involved with Aboriginal community development for over 30 years, serving on a range of boards including the NSW Ministry for the Arts, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board, the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council and the Hunter Area Health Board. He is the chairperson for the NSW Centre for Aboriginal Language, Coordination and Development and a member of the NSW Heritage Council.

Ray is a playwright and cultural performer, and continues to advocate for an Indigenous-led intellectual repossession of Aboriginal history, culture and language. Ray was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the University of Newcastle in 2006 in recognition of his contribution to Indigenous communities at state and national levels.

## STOLEN GENERATION ORGANISATIONS

Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation and Coota Girls Corporation are groups established by survivors of the Stolen Generations who are former residents of the Kinchela Boys Home and Cootamundra Girls Home and Bombaderry Childrens Home. Their aim is to support each other and their families and their healing journeys. Members of the groups were involved in planning and participating in the Healing Forum along with representatives from the Stolen Generation Council of NSW & ACT.

For survivors of the Stolen Generations and their families healing is always on their minds and in their hearts. The forum brought together the different Stolen Generation organisations to share their experiences with the delegates who attended.

For the men who were removed from their families and sent to the Kinchela Aboriginal Boys Training Home at South West Rocks, Healing is about recovering identity, dignity and well-being. It is about finding and reconnecting with family, community, culture and country.

Between 1924 and 1970, Aboriginal boys were not just forcibly removed from their families and taken to Kinchela. While living in the home, they were also subjected to physical, sexual, emotional and cultural abuse. Healing is about having that mistreatment recognized and validated and then finding ways to deal with the resulting trauma and grief.

For the Bringing Them Home report into the Stolen Generations Kinchela Boys recalled being referred to by numbers not called by name, having their possessions burned when they arrived at the home and their heads shaved.

Healing now takes many forms for these men as they attempt to find ways to take more control over their own lives and deal with the traumas that have passed to the next generation. The Kinchela men feel a strong bond for their brothers and for the healing and support they provide for each other through the work of their group.

Aboriginal Affairs and the Healing Foundation have supported healing projects that are being run by survivors of the Stolen Generation involved in the Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation and Coota Girls Corporation, as well as the Stolen Generation Council of NSW & ACT. There is strong focus on telling and recording their stories, to acknowledge and understand the trauma they experienced in the homes and throughout their lives. Anniversary events have also been held to commemorate Cootamundra Girls Home in 2012 and Kinchela Boys Home in 2014.

***Healing is helping...“restore the identity of our people. Where do you come from? Where do you fit in? If you don’t know that, how do you know who you are?”***

*Aunty Lorraine Peeters, Winangali Marumali and Cootamundra Girls*





*Trauma is already entrenched, because I'm second, third generation of women that have been taken. It's like its endemic in our mob.*

*It gives you a forum where you can listen and where you feel comfortable telling your story and once that's off your chest then you're better able to go back to your kids and your grandchildren and sit down and talk to them.*

*Aunty Wilma Moran, Coota Girls*



## PANELISTS AND DISCUSSION LEADERS

- Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation representatives
- Cootamundra Girls Home representatives
- Ken Zulumovski, Gamarada Mens Self Help Healing Program
- Lee-Anne Mason, 2 Women Dreaming Healing – La Pouse Women
- Angela Webb, ABSEC – Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care Secretariat
- Uncle Paul McLeod, Shoalhaven Men's Health & HELL Conference (Healing Empowerment Leadership Lore)
- Dr Robyn Shields AM, Deputy Commissioner, Mental Health Commission NSW
- Iris White, Board member, Aboriginal Legal Services (NSW/ACT) Incorporated
- Carmen Parter, Centre for Aboriginal Health, NSW Ministry for Health

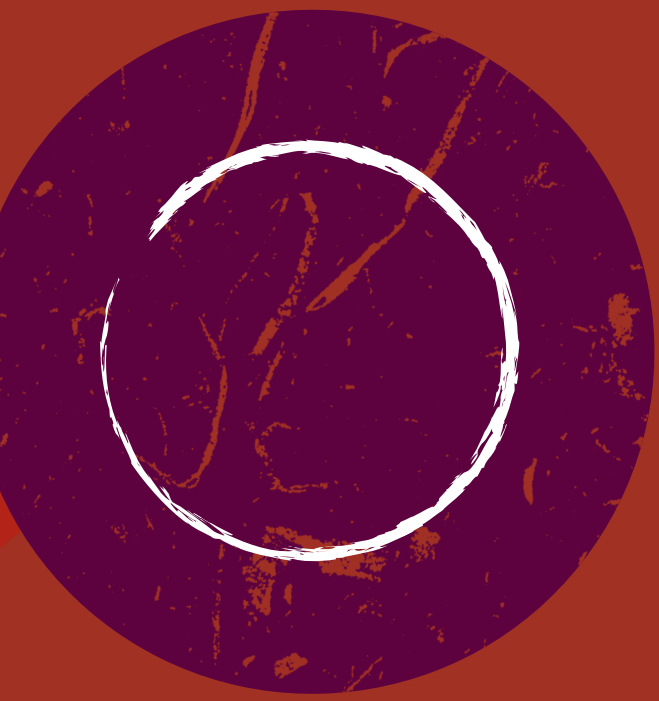
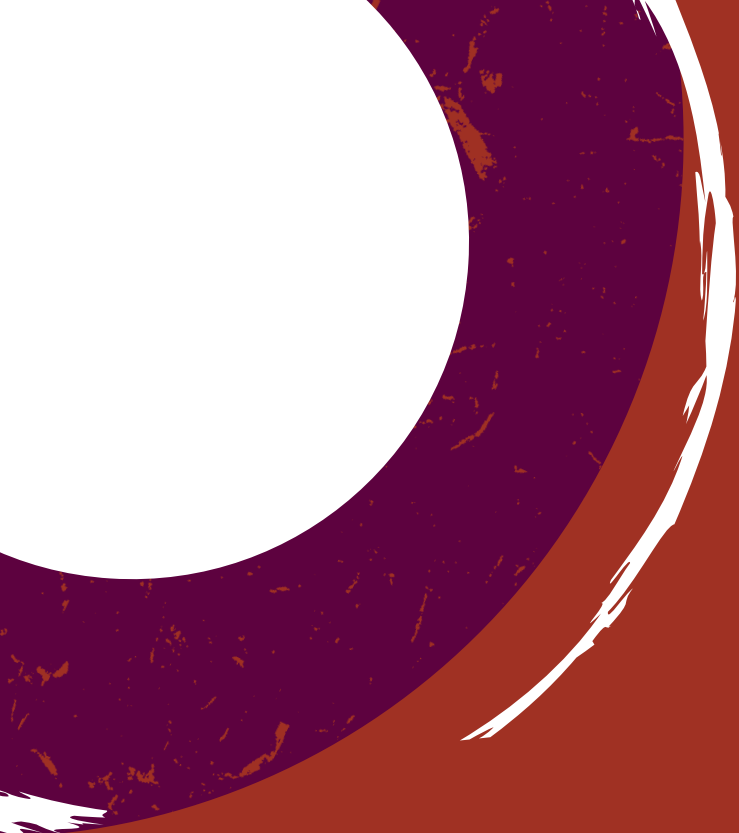
*Healing is... "Healing moves beyond the physical and individual. It re-centres us culturally and reconnects us to who we are and where we belong. It gives us the strength to deal with the past so that we might build a better future for ourselves, our communities and our families."*

*Kirsten Gray – CEO NSW Reconciliation Council*



# ELEMENTS OF PROGRAMS





[www.healingourway.com.au](http://www.healingourway.com.au)

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© February 2015  
ISBN 978-0-9585971-3-5