



HealingFoundation

Strong Spirit • Strong Culture • Strong People

TRAINING & EDUCATION

VOLUME
2

Journey to Healing

DECEMBER 2012 – NOVEMBER 2013



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Executive summary

In 2012 the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation funded 47 projects across Australia in remote, rural and urban areas under its Community Education and Workplace Training funding round. The primary purpose of the funding round was to provide community education and work place training opportunities to develop skills for understanding and managing the outcomes of trauma.

An external evaluator was contracted to evaluate the funding round. The evaluation found that the participants and trainers involved in the projects significantly increased their knowledge and understanding of trauma and how it manifests in communities, families, workplaces and individuals. An in depth analysis of five funded projects found that understanding the impact of trauma on health and wellbeing has been transformative for participants and healers alike.

Through an increased understanding of the relationship between the experience of trauma and negative behaviours significant outcomes of the programs include:

increased engagement in employment – 51% of all projects provided support to create opportunities for employment

increased participation and engagement in schools and safer communities

Evidence and case studies from these projects demonstrate that communities have had limited understanding of how their collective and on-going experiences of trauma, as a result of past government policies, has manifested in increased health issues and family and community dysfunction and disengagement. This evidence also indicates that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce is carrying significant levels of trauma. Self-care strategies and increased training and qualifications are required to sustain the employment of those working in the areas of health and social emotional wellbeing.

The Healing Foundation's commitment to locally informed, culturally based program design has led to program success. Based on principles of co-design and knowledge creation, this work ensures our communities can measure their success effectively and have program logic models in place that are driving real change. These initiatives lead to communities better able to work constructively, individuals gaining and maintaining employment, and the creation of positive environments for our children and young people.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation is a national, independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation with a focus on healing our community.

The Healing Foundation works to address the profound legacy of pain and hurt of our people caused by colonisation, forced removals and other past government policies.

Building culturally strong community programs, designed and delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldview, the Healing Foundation is improving the wellbeing of our people by:

- ◆ developing the story of healing by funding healing programs
- ◆ raising the profile and documenting the importance of culturally strong healing programs through research and evaluation
- ◆ building leadership and the capacity of communities and workers to deal with trauma through education and training.

Background

In February 2012, following an open-tender funding process, the Healing Foundation funded 47 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-driven projects to deliver training and education projects to communities and workforces around Australia. The primary purpose of the funding round was to provide community education and work place training opportunities to develop skills for understanding and managing the outcomes of trauma. The grants were for community education of up to \$40,000 per year for two years and workforce development of up to \$70,000 per year for two years for accredited and non-accredited training for staff in the social and emotional wellbeing workforce.

Project activities include:

- ◆ professional development training in culturally based, trauma informed care for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous workers who see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients
- ◆ cultural renewal and revitalisation activities as a focus to discuss and address the profound loss and grief in our communities
- ◆ healing camps on country
- ◆ Stolen Generations yarning circles, peer group support, and healing gatherings
- ◆ men's and women's gatherings and yarning circles
- ◆ individual and group counselling
- ◆ life skills programs focusing on prevention, resilience and recovery from trauma
- ◆ development of culturally specific resources and training materials to assist with healing trauma, grief and loss
- ◆ training in conflict mediation, suicide prevention, mental health first aid and lateral violence prevention

These projects began their activities in June 2012. This report covers the 12 month period December 2012 - November 2013.



Role of training and education in healing

The trauma experienced by Indigenous people as a result of colonisation and subsequent policies, such as the forced removal of children, has had devastating consequences. The disruption of our culture and the negative impacts on the cultural identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples has had lasting negative effects, passed from generation to generation. "There is a general consensus in the field of trauma research that individuals who are exposed to traumatic events also experience psychological and physical health problems"¹. The unresolved trauma that is experienced by our people plays a role in the social and health disadvantages present in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across the nation however, the role of unresolved trauma is often overlooked.

Analysis of the Training and Education project indicates that the great majority of participants did not understand that trauma played a role in their own lives and behaviours, and developing this understanding has been, in many cases, transformative.

Social Compass, the external evaluators noted:

"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

Understanding trauma is the first step in building skills and capacities to cope with the impacts at an individual, family and community level and the first step in the healing journey.

In order for social and emotional wellbeing services to provide responsive and culturally appropriate care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities it is important that the workforce has a good understanding of the impact of colonisation and how intergenerational trauma and grief affects the community.

The workforce development component of this funding round has provided workers with the opportunity to better understand the impact of trauma and grief on the communities where they work. The funding round data shows a significant improvement in workers' confidence to recognise and address trauma as a result of the training. This assists to better position services to assist in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing.

"The health professionals participating in the workshop acknowledged how important it is to listen to families who have been directly affected by suicide and trauma. Hearing about the effects and implications directly from families who have experienced the loss of a family member has helped in understanding the different layers of grief, loss and other implications such as guilt, shame; and family and community dynamics."

Participants recognise that to overcome trauma and other issues the healing process has to be directed by the community. The participants feel that they have a better understand of the issues that affect the Indigenous community and the wider spread of grief, loss and trauma that the community faces on a daily basis. An important aspect of the training workshops has been the recognition of past policies impacting on the lives of Indigenous people."

.....
1 Baker et al (2009) Child trauma and adult physical health in Mexico

The development of trauma informed practice, an emerging field, is critical to addressing the unresolved trauma present in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This funding round provided opportunities for community education and professional development training to understand trauma and build skills to address trauma across the community.

Social Compass examined five projects in depth and found that:

“The evidence from this evaluation is strong that these projects have:

- ◆ increased knowledge of how to intervene when working with trauma
- ◆ increased confidence in relation to their work overall
- ◆ 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. Further the impacts of such workplaces on individuals, service provision, families and communities are evidenced in the data. There are changes that are substantive and sustainable.”

– Social Compass 2014

The Healing Foundation is supporting the development of quality frameworks for trauma informed practice.

We cannot create healing by focussing on the symptoms of trauma, such as substance addiction, violence, and poor economic engagement, alone. It is essential that we develop a deeper understanding of trauma in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This report outlines how the development of a workforce and community who are better informed about trauma can lead to positive change for individuals, families and communities.

Data analysis

Data collected from funded projects provides information about each project’s performance in line with service agreements. Data is also collected on agreed national outcomes and associated indicators. This data, along with case studies, provide a picture of the effectiveness of the training and education work, and how it contributes to the healing agenda. An external evaluation of the funding round has also been completed. This evaluation reviewed 47 projects, with 5 projects selected for in-depth evaluation.

Performance reporting data

Table 1 summarises the performance reporting data collected from the 47 active funded projects between 1 December 2012 and 30 November 2013.

Indigenous employment outcomes	149
Total number of participants	4947
Total number of services delivered	96
Participant satisfaction	82%

Table 1: Performance reporting data 1 December 2012 – 30 November 2013

Approximately five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were employed per project during December 2012 to November 2013. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are employed as paid staff, training facilitators, cultural consultants and contractors.

An average of 105 workers and community members per project received training that builds skills in the management of trauma. Satisfaction rates amongst participants are particularly high at around 82%, demonstrating the value of culturally-informed training opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants.

National outcomes and indicators

The Healing Foundation highlights national outcomes relevant to the funded projects. Four national outcomes were developed for this funding round, forming the basis of the project reporting each six months.

Figure 5: National outcome 1 - increased knowledge of the impacts of trauma

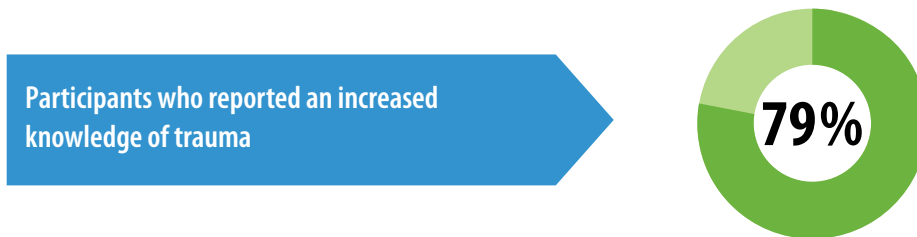
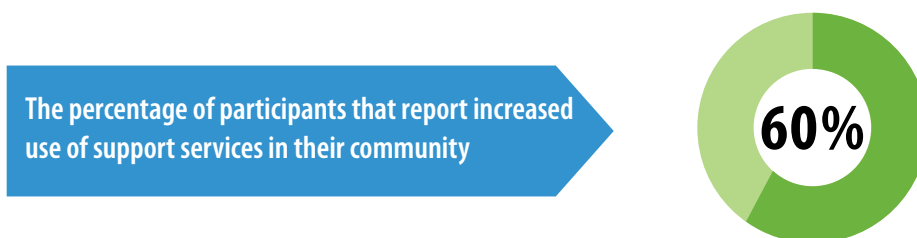


Figure 6: National outcome 2 - increased capacity to manage the impacts of trauma constructively



The results of national outcomes 1 and 2 demonstrate that the projects are effective in helping community members to develop trauma management and coping skills. These figures show an increase of 3% from the period June – November 2012 showing that as the projects become more experienced in the delivery of their activities they are able to better meet the needs of their communities.

Figure 7: National outcome 3 - increased knowledge of support services available to assist participants



National outcome three knowledge of and access to support services, indicates that participation in the projects is enabling community members to better engage with existing support services such as drug and alcohol services, domestic and family violence service, counselling and so forth. This shows that for many participants, community education about trauma encourages them to take further steps in their own healing journey and make use of existing support services to do so. This data is also supported by the qualitative data which continues to show that access to and engagement with services is an important theme.

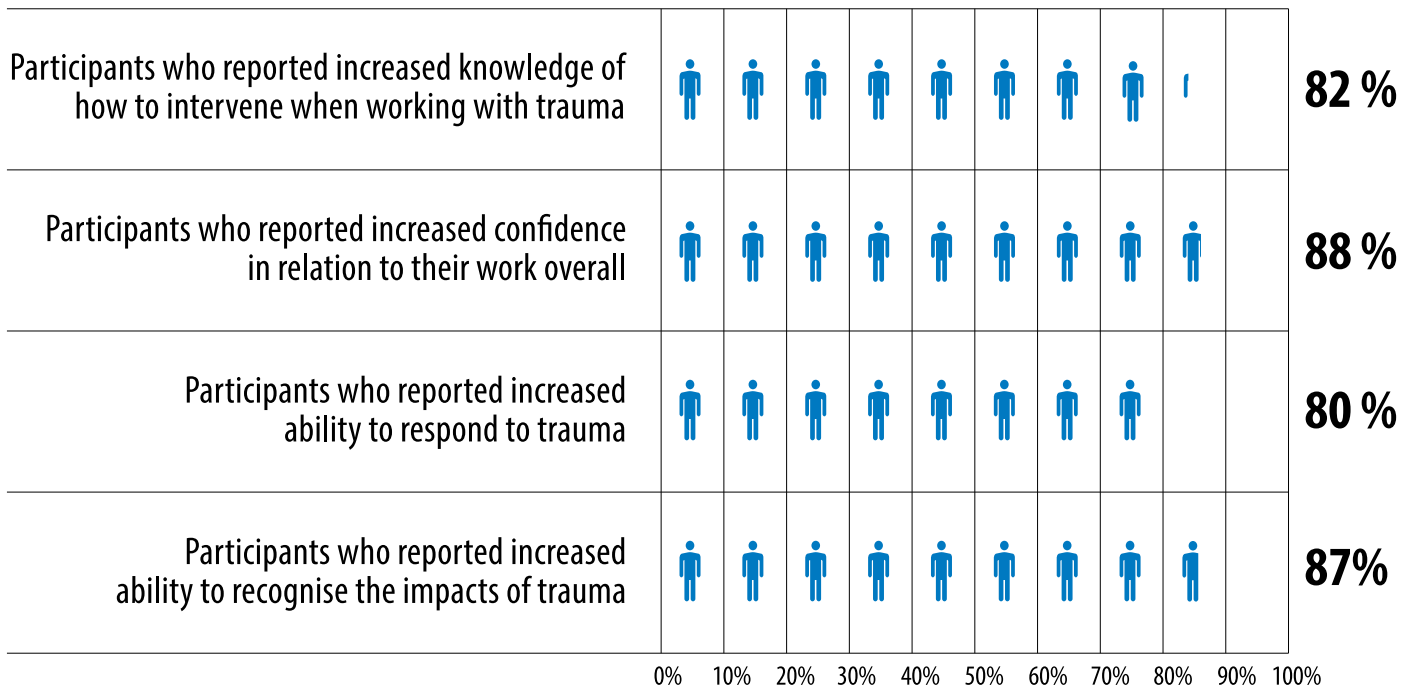


FIGURE 8: National outcome 4 - a workforce with increased capacity to recognise and respond to trauma, loss and grief

National outcome four is about the creation of a trauma- informed workforce, which is culturally safe and aware of the historical and intergenerational nature of trauma for our people. The data shows that the projects continue to achieve a high degree of effectiveness in working towards this outcome. Through the workforce development activities, the projects are helping to build the capacity of the workforce to respond to trauma and more appropriately service our communities.



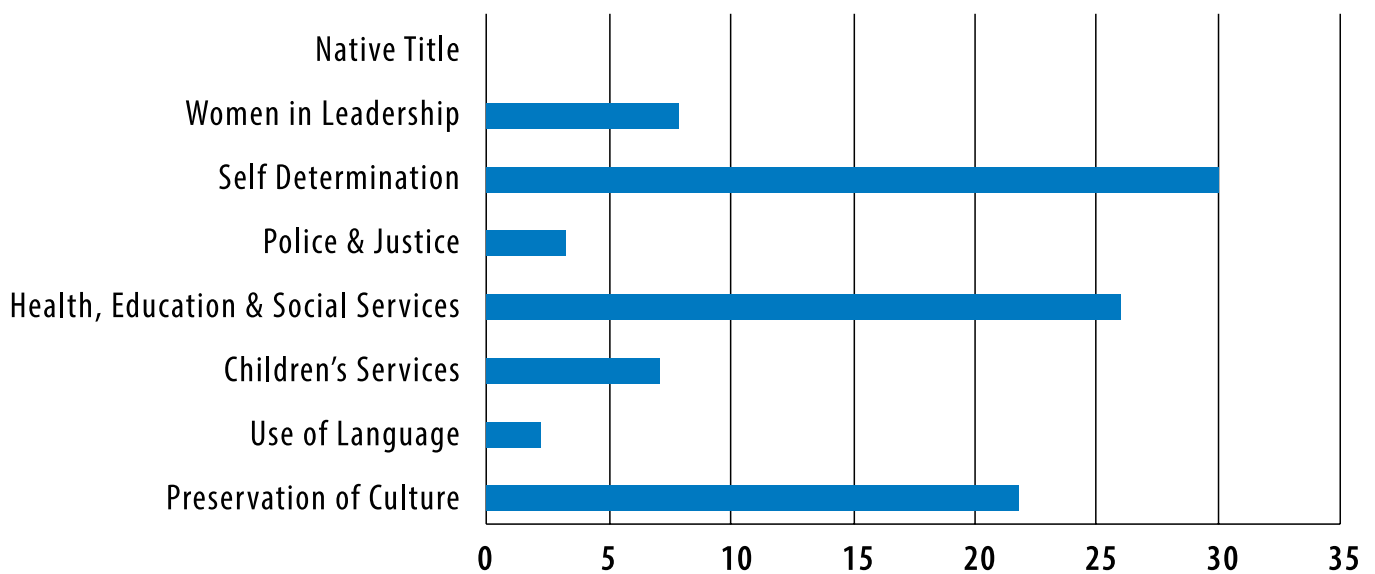
How healing is protective

Emeritus Professor Michael Chandler is a Canadian researcher with expertise in social and emotional wellbeing. He has written widely on the concept of cultural continuity and identity in Aboriginal communities. Cultural continuity is enabled where communities have an understanding of and access to their past and share and have ownership of a common future. Chandler and his colleagues proposed six to eight factors that they believed acted as protection against youth suicide in First Nation communities in Canada (Chandler & Lalonde 2008). Chandler and Lalonde found that communities that had the greatest number of protective factors recorded significantly less suicide and in many cases no suicide at all. The protective factors they found made a significant difference were:

- ◆ self-determination and self-government
- ◆ progression of native title and land claims
- ◆ a measure of control over health, education and social services
- ◆ a measure of influence over police and justice services
- ◆ a measure of control over children’s services
- ◆ community facilities that allowed for preservation of culture
- ◆ knowledge of Indigenous languages
- ◆ women in leadership and governance roles.

Understanding these protective factors in an Australian context is an ongoing process for the Healing Foundation and others. However a review of our funded projects found that many of them incorporated these protective factors in their design and delivery. All of our projects build on the strengths of their community by delivering services founded on strong culture and traditional ways of healing from trauma and loss. As we refine our understanding more in our own context additional or new protective factors may emerge. Currently there are some significant areas appearing, allowing us to define some of the critical factors of healing that are building the strength of our communities to face difficulties more effectively.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS



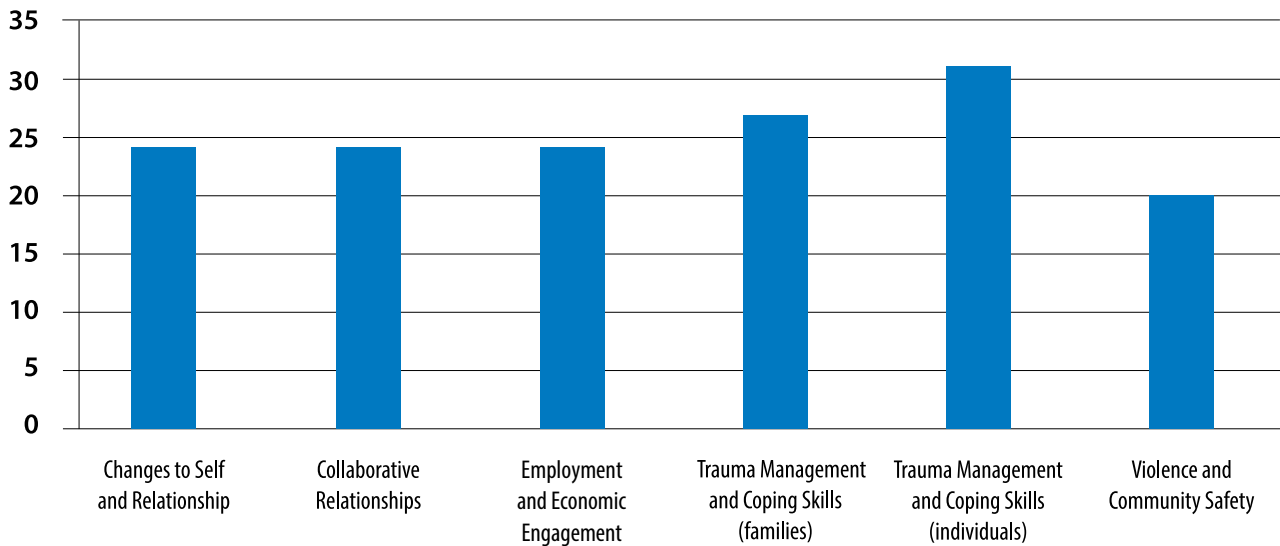
The projects have worked across most of the Chandler protective factors, with strong emphasis on: self-determination and governance; control over health, education, and social services; and preservation of culture. The funding round prioritises locally-driven projects in which the community has a control over decision making. This is reflected in the strong emphasis in the Chandler factors on self-determination and control of health and social services. Culture is also central to the work of the training and education projects, which is reflected in an emphasis on preservation of culture. This continues to reflect the centrality of culture to healing trauma, loss and grief in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.



Key emerging themes

Case studies provide a wealth of information about the nature of healing work being undertaken by the funded projects. NVIVO qualitative data analysis software is used to capture and analyse these case studies, providing a means to highlight the key themes identified by the training and education projects.

KEY THEMES IDENTIFIED



Evidence from the funded projects shows that the opportunity to understand and address trauma can lead to immense personal changes that enable participants to build stronger relationships with their families, seize educational opportunities, engage with employment and take on leadership roles within peer groups and community.

Unresolved trauma, loss and grief are critical barriers to engagement with employment, and addressing trauma can enable project participants to overcome and engage with job opportunities that are available in their community. This is evidenced in the case studies from our projects, which describe a number of examples of people being empowered to engage with employment, often for the first time.

Similarly, the presence of violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is often driven by the unresolved trauma that families are carrying. Again, through the case studies from our projects, we can see the personal changes that can result from addressing this trauma, with many perpetrators of violence being able to learn positive coping strategies to deal with their own pain. This can enable perpetrators to overcome their own use of violence and provide safe home environments for their families.

Across the projects the data demonstrates the impact that understanding trauma can have on people’s lives, with many participants seeking to access support services which they have previously been reluctant to engage with. For example, as one men’s group project describes:

“one participant began working through depression and trauma from removal of his children. He has previously turned to substance abuse to deal with these issues. In recent times he has built up constructive strategies to cope with his trauma which include abstaining from illicit drug use, actively participating in Men’s Group activities, actively looking for employment and education opportunities, and has begun to see a psychologist. This participant has stated that he now has a better quality of life, he is now enrolled in University and his on a healthy journey to reach his goals.”

Building capacity to cope with and address trauma also has significant impacts for families. Understanding trauma and how it impacts upon their children and developing skills to deal with this can mean that parents are better equipped to address their children's social and emotional wellbeing needs. For example, one suicide prevention project reported that after attending the training, parents and community members began making an effort to spend quality time with their children and develop stronger relationships.

Understanding trauma can also benefit the parent child relationship by giving children an understanding of their parent's distress. A Stolen Generations project reported that encouraging children to attend the yarnning circles along with their parents gave children the opportunity to understand the trauma their parents had suffered and how this had impacted upon their own parenting. For those children of Stolen Generations members who were also parents themselves, this has provided an opportunity to understand the intergenerational nature of trauma, and how these impacts may also have influenced the parenting of their own children.

At the community level, participating in projects builds community skills in addressing trauma and can be an impetus for community members to build supportive community network, or to identify ways in which the community can work together to respond to trauma. This can be peer-to-peer connections, workforce connections or whole of community. The great majority of the projects have provided opportunities for peer-to-peer connections to develop, supporting recovery and strength in people who have experienced trauma.

Peer groups such as Stolen Generations members, women who have experience violence, or men who perpetrated violence have found great strength in sharing their experiences of trauma and developing skills to overcome their traumas together. Many projects have reported the importance of sharing the journey, that knowing you are not alone in your healing is a very powerful protective mechanism for participants. As one participant described:

"I feel stronger in having shared feelings with the other participants and feel that this has been constructive, although I was worried that it would bring up too much sadness from my life. Being with others and feeling supported was a great help and was very constructive. I know if I have a bad day, I can have someone local to talk to that I can trust and not feel shamed that there is anything I have conveyed that will judge me in a negative way, it was a great feeling."

Workforce connections are important to building a network of practice within the community. For example, the workforce training in one remote community was the impetus for the establishment of a community of male social and emotional wellbeing workforce members to take leadership in the community in promoting healthy male role models. Similarly, whole of community workshops can support the community to consider ways in which they respond to trauma across the community.

One project described how a whole of community workshop enabled an understanding of the trauma that existed in their community and to start viewing it as something that could be collectively overcome. As one participant described:

"How powerful if we could now get together on other issues ... the results of this could be too deadly."

By addressing the underlying trauma in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities our projects are also evidencing stories of change in participants who, once they have begun to address their underlying trauma, are often empowered to make positive changes in multiple aspects of their lives.

One woman was suffering from loss and grief that had led to alcohol use. Following her regular attendance at a women's yarning circle which addressed trauma, loss and grief, this woman was able to give up her alcohol use and enrolled in an employment training and recruitment program.

A case study from another project described immense personal changes to a woman who had been involved in the justice system since her teens. By attending the healing project this woman was able to understand the immense trauma she was carrying as a result of childhood sexual abuse and being healing from her trauma. This has led to immense personal growth for the young woman and she has not only been able to avoid re-offending, but has also been able to gain employment as a youth worker.

The Social Compass evaluation found that these funded projects, through supporting participants to begin to take control over their own lives, assist to break cycles. .

“participants have gained a sense of control of themselves, their relationships and their workplaces. Control is built through cultural knowledge which allows Aboriginal people to see themselves as strong people who respect themselves and others – breaking some of the appropriated views and stereotypes Indigenous people have held about themselves.”

– Social Compass 2014

By building individual, family and community capacity to address trauma, the projects have worked to create a supportive environment for healing in these communities.



Building the evidence base for healing

Evidence from the literature review of Indigenous healing programs in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United State of America finds that there are eight critical elements that are common to all quality Indigenous healing programs, regardless of where they are located. The Training and Education projects contain these elements and are continuing to develop the evidence base for healing within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.



Developed to address issues in the local community

The Healing Foundation prioritises locally designed and delivered projects that are developed within the community to address the specific needs of the local community. For this reason no two projects that have been funded are the same. Projects working in a number of communities have also tailored their activities depending upon the needs, capacities and interests within each community. For example, a mediation project intended delivering accredited training to a number of remote communities. Half way through the training in one community it was decided that they preferred to focus more on practical skills and support for developing a mediation practice group rather than continuing with the full accreditation course work and assessment.

The Healing Foundation's contract management processes enable flexibility so that projects can be responsive to community needs, whilst ensuring they continue to deliver outcomes in line with the original intention of the project. This flexibility ensures that projects are able to utilise funds effectively to address community issues.

Driven by local leadership

For projects to be locally designed and delivered it is critical they are driven by local leadership. Governance mechanisms for projects may include traditional cultural leaders such as Elders as part of knowledge circles and steering committees and guidance from local support workers. It may include input from community members who will be involved in the project activities, such as service user groups. Co-design principles are central to the responsiveness and effectiveness of translating knowledge into practice.

Developed theory and evidence base

The Social Compass evaluation found, that of the five projects examined in depth, most of the essential elements of quality healing programs were in place. This evidence demonstrates that communities have a good inherent understanding of what works well, without having access to evidence or a supporting theory of change.

Ongoing work is needed to define and name this theory of change. The Healing Foundation in its evaluation and monitoring strategy is enabling the development of this knowledge system and growing our understanding of what works.

Combine western methodologies with Indigenous healing

All of the funded projects combine aspects of western therapeutic methodologies with Indigenous approaches to addressing trauma, loss and grief. This enables communities to take useful learnings from mainstream approaches and combine them with their community's cultural expertise to develop culturally appropriate projects that meet the healing needs of their communities. As one participant describes this approach "taps into the spiritual needs of Aboriginal people as well as the clinical." Projects combine western skills counsellors, social work and therapy, with traditional healing, traditional arts and ceremony and the use of country.

One project facilitated collaborative training between mental health workers and traditional healers to enable better understanding of how both groups could work together for better outcomes for people with mental illness in their communities. Another project delivered mediation training in remote communities. This training led to the establishment of mediation groups within these communities, where mediators were able to take learnings from the mediation training and combine this with cultural approaches to restorative justice and mediating crisis. By combining western methodologies with Indigenous healing approaches, the projects are able to ensure that their activities are tailored to meet the healing needs of their community in a culturally relevant and responsive way.

Understand the impact of colonisation and intergenerational trauma and grief

The Healing Foundation's approach to funding locally driven projects ensures that all projects are designed with a clear understanding of the impact of colonisation and intergenerational trauma and grief on the local community. While the funded projects have been designed with a good understanding of the local experience of trauma, loss and grief, many community members are unaware of the extent to which trauma impacts on their individual lives.

Through community education the projects are helping communities to:

- ◆ understand the historical basis of trauma in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- ◆ recognise the manifestation of trauma through pain-based behaviours such as family violence, substance abuse and disengagement from education and employment
- ◆ understand the impact of trauma on children and families
- ◆ recognise lateral violence as an expression of historical trauma and racial disadvantage.

Build individual, family and community capacity

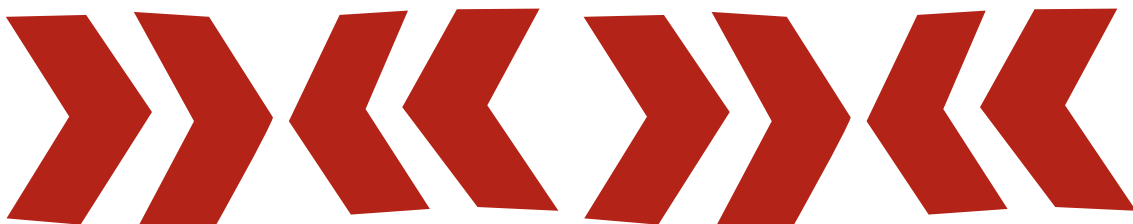
Projects have worked to build individual, family and community capacity to address trauma, loss and grief. The projects work on multiple levels and impact upon individuals and across the whole community to create a supportive environment for healing to occur.

Projects enable participants and communities to understand trauma and to recognise when trauma is influencing individual lives and behaviours. In many cases this can lead participants to view their own behaviours in a new light, and understand issues such as depression, substance misuse and violence as expressions of trauma, and issues that they can seek help to work through. This is evidenced through both the increase in the knowledge of, and use of, services that this funding has resulted in.

Proactive rather than reactive

Unaddressed trauma, loss and grief are often the causal factor in substance misuse, family and lateral violence, and poor engagement in education and the workforce. By addressing the underlying trauma in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, the projects are by their nature, proactive rather than reactive. Healing proactively seeks to address the cause of people's pain and distress, rather than reactively addressing the symptoms- such as violence and alcohol use- and overlooking the cause. There are numerous examples from the data which demonstrate the effectiveness of a proactive approach for impacting on the downstream effects.

Projects are creating the space for healing so that community members can seek support for personal change when they are ready rather than waiting until a crisis for a community to respond.



Incorporate strong evaluation frameworks

The Healing Foundation is working to support the evaluative capacity of the projects through the use of outcome-based reporting frameworks which encourage project staff to reflect upon their project's achievements and how these are contributing to positive outcomes for their communities. This enables projects to see the link between the activities that they have planned and the outcomes they are working to achieve. It also provides the opportunity for projects to reflect upon activities which may not be working well- which are not achieving the outcomes that were expected- and provides the opportunity to consider changes to activity plans to ensure that projects are able to achieve the outcomes they intended.

This reflective process helps to ensure that projects stay on track and meet their original objectives. Outcomes-based reporting also ensures that the Healing Foundation is able to capture many significant stories of healing which in turn contributes to building our evidence base for healing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contexts.

The funded projects have been very keen to collaborate with the Healing Foundation to build stronger evaluation frameworks. Social Compass observed that:

“ in terms of interest in being involved in the comprehensive evaluation, almost one third of all funded organisations provided an expression of interest. The evaluation approach taken by the Healing Foundation is essentially one of partnership and this has highlighted an appetite for evaluation in Aboriginal organisations. Therefore, building the evaluative capacity of Aboriginal organisations will become increasingly important and should be a point of focus for funding bodies.”

– Social Compass 2014

By building evaluative capacity and reflecting upon outcomes projects have been able to refine and refocus their work to meet project goals and identified community needs. This process is critical to building quality healing environments which support the healing needs of our communities.

How healing contributes to the Indigenous Advancement Strategy

Evidence from the Training and Education projects show that healing, and in particular, understanding and responding to trauma, loss and grief, has significant benefits across the key thematic areas of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy.

Jobs, Land, Economy

The funded projects have made a significant contribution by providing work and training and development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

A total of 149 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consultants, project officers, support workers, trainers and facilitators have been employed across the 47 projects in this 12 month period.

In addition to the direct employment opportunities created by the funding round, 64% of the projects have provided workforce development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce members who are employed in the social and emotional wellbeing sector and related support services.

Project Case Study: Developing hope and aspirations for a career

A young participant who attended the women's group reported that she learned so much from the older women that she made a conscious choice to remove herself and be different from the people she was associating with who didn't work or didn't have aspirations in many areas of their lives.

She linked in with support services and with their assistance created her resume and applied for job to meet her aspirations. She soon returned to let the staff know that she was successful in gaining employment and training in hospitality at a well-known resort. She also thanked the staff for their assistance and support to put the changes she identified for herself into action and for the confidence she gained through her participation in the women's group activities that gave her the strength to seek out this job opportunity.

149 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were employed by the projects over the 12 month period

This training has been both accredited and non-accredited and has enabled workforce members the opportunity to understand trauma, loss and grief and the impacts on their communities, and build skills to better meet the healing needs of the community.

Perhaps the most significant impact these projects have had is to the personal changes that participants experienced, with programs providing case studies and examples of participants whose healing experience has enabled them to engage with work or further study opportunities.

At least nine projects have specifically mentioned participants who have been empowered to engage with employment opportunities or work towards employment. Some of these participants are engaging in the workforce for the first time, others are undertaking work preparation studies such as certificate level courses and joining Indigenous recruitment programs. Still others are taking on voluntary opportunities to gain valuable work experience to set them on a pathway to employment. This includes a number of people who have taken on peer mentoring roles providing them with skills and experience to equip them for a career in the healing and social and emotional wellbeing sectors.

This demonstrates that opportunities to understand trauma loss and grief can be a catalyst for profound personal development leading to a pathway to employment. Unresolved trauma, loss and grief are impediments to being able to take up employment opportunities and contributes to the disadvantage that Aboriginal Torres Strait Islanders face in achieving employment outcomes.

Before our people can avail themselves of the employment opportunities that are available, it will be critical that they have the opportunity to address their healing needs through locally-run, culturally relevant healing programs and processes. Through healing we can create renewed opportunities for our people to successfully engage with employment and training and create brighter futures of themselves and their families.

Children and schooling

Understanding trauma, loss and grief, and connecting to cultural identity have shown significant benefits for engagement with schooling for children and young people. Within this funding round- there were only five projects that worked specifically with children and young people. The data and case studies from these projects outline significant achievements in terms of enabling children and young people to better engage with their education. These projects have also described significant improvements in the children's behaviours in school. This included increased engagement with school work, a reduction in negative behaviours and the need for disciplinary action, and improved social skills, including taking on leadership roles within their school community. Fostering positive cultural identity has been a particular focus of these projects and this has led to improved esteem in the children and young people who have participated in the projects.



Project Case Study: Building Leadership Skills

One project worked specifically with high school students to understand the impacts of intergenerational trauma and build confidence in their cultural identities. Many of the students were struggling with behavioural difficulties at school. Over the course of the project, the youth workers noticed significant improvement in the participation and confidence of the students involved in the project. Teachers also noticed marked improvement in the behaviour and school work of many of the students involved.

Two of the participants were selected to play in the Under 16's Indigenous Rugby League team and to represent this team overseas in France and England for a month. The boy's commitment to the program and their exemplary behaviour at school and within the community led to this selection.

This was significant as it demonstrated the improvement in their engagement with their schooling and their developing leadership skills have stemmed from their participation in the project. This opportunity allowed the boys to recognize that working hard and committing yourself to being respectful and engaging respectfully with others enables you to have other opportunities. This is also significant as it provided the boys with a deep pride and respect for their culture. Their selection gave them the opportunity to represent their culture and this has had a significant impact on their sense of identity.

The Healing Foundation has a separate funding round that specifically focusses on projects for children and young people- the Intergenerational Trauma projects. The evaluation from these projects have found that improving outcomes for children and young people in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is also dependent upon addressing the immense trauma, loss and grief in the lives of their parents, extended families and communities.

By working across the community to address trauma projects are helping to enable more hopeful futures for our children and young people. By addressing the healing needs of parents, they are better able to meet the needs of their children. This is evident in many of the case studies, where, for example, a mother has been empowered to leave a violent relationship for the safety of her children, a father has found the strength to overcome his substance abuse and reunite with his family, and a mother has become motivated to seek help for her mental health needs in order to be able to return her children to her care.

Children's lives are directly impacted upon by the transgenerational trauma their families carry. These projects demonstrate the importance of holistic healing programs which are working with parents to change their parenting capacity to be present in meaningful ways in the lives of their children.

One project, based at the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, undertook a series of yarning circles with community members and workforce members in relation to parenting and taking care of children and young people in Koori communities. The detailed series of discussions were transcribed and analysed to understand the critical factors that work to strengthen children, parents and families within a cultural framework. The following diagram Koori Parenting: What works for us was developed by the project to outline these factors. By supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems the Healing Foundation is supporting communities to strengthen capacity and build brighter futures for young ones and their families.



Koori Parenting: What works for us

Key themes from the Trauma Education Project parenting yarning circles developed by the Victorian Aboriginal Healing Service



Safety & Wellbeing

Community safety, in particular ending the cycle of violence in our communities, has been a strong theme emerging from the data across this funding round.

43% of projects in this funding round have discussed the issue of violence in some way, with many significant case studies showing the positive impact that healing can have to building the capacity for individuals and communities and address and overcome violence.

Project Case Study: Overcoming Violence

One man participating in the men's group had a long history with the criminal justice system and is currently on parole. This participant's charges over the recent years have been predominately in relation to domestic violence. As a result of this participant attending our men's program he has spoken about his feelings and the impact of his violent behaviour has had on the partners he has had in his life. This participant has been able to identify and name the behaviours that have impacted on his past victims and has acknowledged that he needed to make change as he has recently started a new relationship and did not want to make the same errors. This participant has spoken about being more aware of his current partner's feelings and has been proactive in using active listening skills. This participant has also spoken about being able to identify when he is feeling challenged and is becoming angry. This participant has spoken about being able to respond to his anger and use strategies to help deescalate his anger and communicate this without becoming explosive.

For this participant attending the men's group has assisted in maintaining his role as an Aboriginal man in society and building on a healthy relationship with his current partner. As a result of this participant improving his life it will mean that his current partner will live without violence in her relationship, that this participant will not be incarcerated for violent behaviour and that there will be another Aboriginal man in society who can demonstrate positive change and outcomes for his community.

In addition to overcoming family violence, many of the projects have had a positive impact on addressing lateral violence in communities and workplaces. The Human Rights Commission defines lateral violence as a range of negative social behaviours directed towards one and other in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including gossiping, jealousy, bullying, shaming, social exclusion, family feuding, organisational conflict and physical violence. Lateral violence is a direct result the experience of violence, racism and disempowerment that was associated with colonisation.

Whilst only one project focused exclusively on the issue of lateral violence a further seven projects included lateral violence as a topic within their broader training relating to trauma. This means that 18% of the funded projects named the issue of lateral violence specifically in their projects.

The in-depth external evaluation included the lateral violence focussed project as one of the projects for evaluation. The external evaluator observed the impact that naming lateral violence can have for participants. The evaluation reports that:

“ there was a realisation that ‘lateral violence’ is a named concept that they have known to be wrong and internalised and that they have been struggling with. There was acknowledgement that that participants have experienced lateral violence in significant ways and that it can be explained and managed. Without exception, participants also acknowledged that, as much as they have been victims of lateral violence, they have also been perpetrators.”

– Social Compass 2014

This is a powerful realisation that enables participants to develop a deep understanding of lateral violence in their own communities and the role that they can play in overcoming it.

Project Case Study: Skilling up workers to address lateral violence

One project delivered training designed to address the issue of lateral violence in our communities through an intensive residential workshop. This project followed a train-the-trainer methodology and worked to build the skills necessary to recognise and address lateral violence within communities and workplaces. The key objective of the training is to have participants design and trial their own approach to lateral violence training. Evaluation of this project evidenced the following.

“On day 1 we met two young Indigenous men who worked for Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. Both men were quiet, even shy, and offered very little of themselves voluntarily. However, as with their fellow participants, during the course of their first day, they had their moment of recognition of what lateral violence is and who it was/is affecting their own communities and organisations ... Returning to the workshop 5 days later, we arrived to see the same young men conduct a mock training session with their fellow participants, They had been nervous about this part of the requirement for much of the week ... The transformation of these two young men was one of the most observable changes that I have ever experience in 15 years of social research ... It seemed that on this occasion the project was sending these two young men back to their community “armed with the knowledge [and confidence] to identify and commence internal programs to fight and eradicate lateral violence from within”

Culture and Capability

In the first report for this funding round we established that cultural is the process through which healing takes place. Rather than a simply a tool to translate mainstream concepts in to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander projects, cultural approaches to dealing with trauma are central to the healing process.

By allowing communities the opportunity to take care of their healing within their own cultural frameworks, our projects provide opportunity for cultural skills and knowledge to be valued and recognised. Through the projects we fund, community members have the opportunity to be employed for their cultural knowledge and expertise. The opportunity for cultural leaders and healers to be paid for their skills gives communities a sense that they are capable and valued and that their cultural skills have and important role to play in the healing of their communities.

The Social Compass evaluation of this funding round also found that:

“ the inclusion of culture in the healing process is providing critical to program success. As a tool it is used to locate loss and grief. Cultural load is an explicit and implicit means used to identify trauma and embark on a healing process. This is articulated differently in each program but there is in every case a sense of the accumulation of factors/trauma that builds over time and cause minimum angst, an maximum stress, to daily living and working. These become increasingly acknowledged throughout the programs and loss and grief are replaced in empowered ways to manage and cope with trauma.”

– Social Compass 2014

Similarly the evaluation found that connection to country, ancestry, language and intergenerational knowledge were all aspects of cultural pride that were utilised in each program and became important conversations within the healing process. The loss of one or more of these aspects was also found to have increased the impact of the trauma that people felt.

Remote Australia Strategies

The Healing Foundation funds projects in communities across remote, regional and urban Australia. The work that we do specifically with remote communities provides benefits to communities in a number of ways. Often small remote communities are coping with the multiple outcomes of complex trauma, including violence, substance abuse, mental illness, and the continuation of the cycle of intergenerational trauma.

In remote communities, the funding provided by the Healing Foundation provides much needed financial support to the organisations and community members who are engaging in healing work. The activities funded by the Healing Foundation, such as yarning circles or healing camps, can provide an opportunity for respite for individuals from the trauma or stress of their everyday lives. Participation in healing projects can also be the catalyst for important discussions at the community level, or inspire a group of individuals to support each other to take on a leadership role in the healing of their community.

Project Case Study: Telling Stolen Generations Stories

One project invited Stolen Generation Elders to tell their stories through writing and art which would be used for a children's book. The process of producing the book - *The colour of my skin* - was a positive experience for all who were involved- the staff and the Elders who wrote and illustrated the book. The staff gained a real understanding of the impact of being stolen. At the same time, the Elders felt a real pride in knowing that what they were doing would impact on the future generations.

With the completion of the book came an immense pride from everyone in the community - children, youth, adults and the Elders themselves. Many of the families, who were given a copy of the book, donated them to their children's schools. The local ABC radio gave coverage to the book each day over the subsequent week, interviewing an Elder each day and hearing their story. Other mainstream schools and preschools have shown great interest in getting a copy of the book to be able to read to their students and we are looking for ways to produce subsequent editions.

The positive impact of the story on the community is that it has increased understanding from the younger generations and the wider community, it has instilled pride by the community for its Elders, and it has allowed the Elders of the Stolen Generation to move further towards healing. Current and future generations will be able to read the stories of the Stolen Generation and keep history alive.

The individuals who participated in the book have sense of pride and ownership over the book that will be shared with their families - children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

The Healing Foundation understands that remote communities are met with frequent challenges that can delay or interrupt the delivery of projects. In order to meet the needs of the remote projects that we fund, and to ensure that they are not disadvantaged as compared to urban and regional projects, the Healing Foundation takes a responsive approach to contract management. Healing Foundation Program staff work with the projects to workshop challenges, develop solutions and amend work plans and activity schedules in line with the original intent of the funding, so that projects are able to delivery meaningful outcomes within realistic timeframes for their communities. This ensures that the great majority of our funded projects are able to succeed and deliver meaningful healing opportunities for their communities.

Project Case Study: Mediating conflict in remote communities

One project delivered mediation training to a number of remote communities, and this saw the development of mediation groups made up of trained community members in a number of these communities. One participant indicated that he became aware of mediation as a different way to deal with the trauma of his own family member's death. The risk of retribution and family feuding following a death is significant in some Aboriginal communities. The identification and pursuit of mediation (in the form of victim and offender conferencing) as an alternate non-violent dispute resolution is very important in promoting healing between families. Participants not only have a greater awareness of mediation as a tool to resolve family disputes, but the training also has fostered the skills and confidence to use this in both personal and professional settings. It is hoped that families and clients of participants will be offered mediation in times of conflict. The adoption of mediation in serious long running feuds is likely to promote reconciliation and harmony.



Challenges

Remote communities continue to experience the significant impacts of trauma loss and grief with high numbers of deaths, suicide, self-harm and consistent changes in government policy and programming. Establishing effective programs and responses in this environment is extremely complex. Communities struggle to undertake more proactive approaches to the challenges they face and are kept in a reactive cycle due to the limitations of infrastructure, professional skill base and the immense cultural load that individual workers are carrying.

Some communities have been so overwhelmed by the significant obligations that have through multiple funding sources, community issues including lease and mining negotiations, and the community fracture that this causes, that they have decided not to continue with their projects at this time.

The social compass evaluation also drew attention to the fact that workforce development and supporting trauma informed practice is going to be complex.

“ there is significant evidence in the findings that those working with people who have suffered trauma have very often themselves suffered or are operating within their own trauma. Many of the programs described throughout this report have a stated objective to increase the capacity of those working with or providing services to Indigenous people. That is, enhanced capacity to understand, identify and manage trauma in others. However, one of the unintended outcomes of a number of the programs is the level of healing that is yet to take place in the ‘healer’. This heal the healer component is a critical finding within this evaluation. It reinforces the levels of trauma that exist in organisations and communities and the need for those working in organisations and with communities on healing programs to find their own healing and having done so to develop longer-term strategies for self-care. These two things will be critical to elements to creating best practice in healing programs. ”

– Social Compass 2014

There is more work and research for the Healing Foundation to fully understand the concept of self-care in building the workforce capacity to identify and manage trauma. We will need to explore how this can be developed at both an individual and workplace level and the tools required to assist people in this area.

Whilst there is certainly evidence of these projects creating changed lives for participants it must be recognised that these are often only first steps in a long term journey. Long term trauma will not be solved in one or two years of a funded project, however, these projects are creating safe and supportive environments to take the first steps on this journey.

Conclusions

Unresolved trauma, loss and grief are a significant burden to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities substantially inhibiting the potential of many of our people. The Training and Education projects have demonstrated that enabling communities to discuss and understand trauma, and take the first steps in a healing journey can have significant outcomes for individuals, families and communities.

These projects highlighted the importance of trauma informed practice for driving outcomes within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Continuing to develop and fund trauma informed practice is of vital importance to achieving outcomes for our communities. If communities cannot take care of their trauma it will continue to be an impediment. The depth of trauma experienced in our communities is only just being recognised, and we have a long way to go to be enabled to create clear pathways to change.

The experience of colonisation and the resultant trauma varies across Australia. To gain a nuanced understanding of trauma there is a need for a greater focus at the regional level. This includes strategic investment to create opportunities for professional staff to develop supportive networks to take care of the significant cultural load that they are carrying. There is also a need to understand the relevant indicators of trauma, such as mental health statistics, to build an understanding of the impacts of trauma across a region and develop an approach for healing trauma informed practice.

The Healing Foundation is working to understand the international evidence of best practice models for trauma informed practice. The international evidence is also being critically informed by our understanding about what is working in the projects that we fund. Using this evidence, the Healing Foundation is building a program framework for a trauma informed organisational structure to enable organisations engaged in healing work to put evidence into practice. This is of great importance to support our organisations- both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to respond better to the healing needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The Healing Foundation has worked closely with external evaluators to build robust evaluation into the reporting process for our funded projects. This has enabled us to obtain a rich source of data with which to measure and understand our impact. The Healing Foundation will continue to work with our funded organisations to build evaluative capacity and promote strong evaluation frameworks for healing work throughout Australia.

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