The Gathering 2024 – bringing Stolen Generations Organisations together

In September 2024, The Healing Foundation brought together more than 100 people from across Australia in Garramilla (Darwin) for The Gathering 2024 – the first national gathering dedicated specifically to Stolen Generations Organisations and survivors.

Representatives from 18 Stolen Generations Organisations, alongside survivors, descendants, young people and sector leaders, spent three days sharing knowledge, strengthening relationships and identifying priorities for the future. With most Stolen Generations survivors now aged over 50 and the 30th anniversary of the *Bringing them home* report approaching in 2027, the event created an important space to reflect on progress, identify ongoing challenges and plan for the future.

A national conversation on healing and justice

The program included discussions on truth-telling, records access, redress, aged care, workforce sustainability, intergenerational healing and the future of Stolen Generations Organisations. Survivors remained at the centre of every conversation, sharing their experiences and insights while helping shape collective priorities.

> *'I feel really proud and privileged that we've been able to have this opportunity to bring together those organisations, services, Stolen Generation survivors, their descendants into one group … to have those really vital conversations about the things that are still needing to be implemented from the Bringing them home report. We're having some really great discussions about redress and compensation for survivors, looking at access to records, what ageing well looks like for our elders.'* – ***Shannan Dodson, CEO, The Healing Foundation***

Delegates explored what is working across the country, including survivor-led healing programs, stronger partnerships with archives and record-holding institutions, truth-telling initiatives and efforts to support younger generations to step into leadership roles. They also identified critical gaps that continue to affect survivors and their families, including inconsistent access to records, inadequate redress, culturally unsafe aged care services and short-term funding arrangements.

For many, the experience of gathering as one sector was itself transformative. As one survivor reflected:

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

Collective Healing Grants have been distributed by The Healing Foundation to Stolen Generations Organisations on behalf of the National Indigenous Australians Agency since 2012.

The Collective Healing Grants support Stolen Generations survivors and their descendants through initiatives that promote healing, strengthen community connections, and enhance wellbeing for Stolen Generations survivors and their communities. These initiatives are delivered by dedicated and committed organisations working to create lasting and positive change across Australia.

The grants program emphasises the importance of intergenerational connections, cultural preservation, and capacity building within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

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Participants also described the event as a powerful healing experience that created space for survivors to be heard and for organisations to discuss shared challenges and opportunities.

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

Building collective strength

Post-event feedback showed overwhelmingly positive results. Opportunities to connect and collaborate received an average rating of 4.54 out of 5, with networking and knowledge exchange identified as the most valuable outcomes. Participants also reported greater understanding of The Healing Foundation's work and strong interest in future gatherings.

> *'Something big is happening for our survivor organisations and for the country. Momentum is here, the fire is burning.'* ***– Raelene Rosas, CEO, NT Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation***

The event reinforced the critical role that Stolen Generations Organisations play in supporting survivors, families and descendants through records access, family reunification, truth-telling, cultural connection, healing activities and advocacy. It also highlighted the need to recognise and sustain this specialised workforce, much of which is carried by survivors, descendants and community members themselves.

Lasting outcomes

The Gathering concluded with a shared commitment to advance the unfinished business of the *Bringing them home* report. Participants identified common priorities including sustainable funding, nationally consistent redress, culturally safe aged care, improved access to records, truth-telling and stronger support for intergenerational healing.

As the 30th anniversary of the *Bringing them home* report approaches in 2027, The Healing Foundation is committed to ensuring that survivor-led priorities drive advocacy, service delivery and healing initiatives nationally.

