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Anniversary of the National Apology to the Stolen Generations

MEDIA RELEASE

It has been 16 years since the National Apology to Stolen Generations was delivered by the Commonwealth Government. The Apology was significant as it was the first formal acknowledgement by the Australian government of the harm caused by policies of assimilation. These policies saw as [many as 1 in 3](#) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children between the 1910s and the 1970s forcibly removed from their families, disconnected from their culture and Country, exploited, and subjected to significant trauma.

The National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners (NAATSIHWP) acknowledges the ongoing pain experienced by Stolen Generations survivors and their descendants and stands in solidarity with their continued resistance and survival. In particular, we stand by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners who are survivors or the descendants of Stolen Generations survivors. In addition to dealing with the personal impacts of assimilationist policies, our workforce support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through the complex health effects of intergenerational trauma caused by policies of assimilation and child removal, they work on the front line to improve health outcomes for all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

While the Apology was a sound first step, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are still waiting on action. The [Productivity Commission's review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#), released last week, demonstrates that the 'business as usual' is not working. The Priority Reform areas have not been prioritised by governments. Today, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are [10.5 times more likely](#) to be in out of home care than non-Indigenous children. Stolen Generations survivors are far more likely to experience a [range of chronic and mental health conditions](#).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people survived the Stolen Generations because of our own strength and resilience. We have demonstrated that the only successful healing initiatives are those which are designed and implemented by us. As a workforce designed by Mob for Mob, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioner professions are a primary example of the success of this approach.

We have shown, time and time again, that the answer lies in self-determination. Therefore, we are seeking unconditional investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led initiatives to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for our Mob. We are seeking deep systems change; a total reform to current ways of working. To heal from assimilation and colonisation, and to continue to flourish, we require power and control over our own lives.