

Stolen Generations Healing Card Proposal

As a nation we owe a duty of care to ageing Stolen Generations survivors to ensure they can access the health services they need, when they need them.

By doing so we can provide Stolen Generations survivors a healthy and dignified aging experience. The Healing Foundation proposes a universal Healing Card for Stolen Generations survivors modelled on the existing 'Gold Card' scheme. Eligible card holders will be entitled to:

- all primary health care needs to support them to stay out of hospital
- all clinically necessary treatment to meet their health care needs
- supports and services that assist them to live at home including respite services for survivors and their carers
- access healing programs that involve family and community.

What are the benefits?

- Healthy ageing at home with community and family supports
- Targeted and more efficient funding model for unique cohort
- Restores dignity for those who have suffered
- Reduced burden of disease and hospital admissions



What is the evidence?

All Stolen Generations will be aged 50 and over by 2023, and eligible for government aged care support. Stolen Generations and their descendants carry higher levels of disadvantage compared to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people resulting in a 'gap within the gap'.

In 2018–19, among Stolen Generations aged 50 and over:

- 71% had government payments as their main income
- 66% did not own a home, and 35% lived alone.
- 47% had arthritis
- 37% had diabetes
- 37% had high blood pressure
- 36% had a mental health condition

In 2017-18, of the estimated 33,600 survivors (AIHW, in press), 27,200 were already aged 50 or more. Many have complex health needs, low incomes and little capital as a result of being removed from their families.

In 2018–19 compared (on an age standardised basis) with the general non-Indigenous population aged 50-plus, Stolen Generations aged 50 and over were :

- 2.8** times as likely to have a disability as a severe or profound core activity limitation
- 2.7** times as likely to have poor mental health (Kessler score)
- 4.6** times as likely to have kidney disease
- 3.1** times as likely to have diabetes
- 3.0** times as likely to have chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
- 2.7** times as likely to have heart, stroke or vascular diseases
- 2.4** times as likely to have asthma.

Who are the Stolen Generations?

Until 1972, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were stolen from their families, communities, and cultures and placed in institutions or adopted by non-Indigenous families.

The breakdown of family and social structures caused by removal decimated communities. It deeply impacted Stolen Generations survivors. They did not know where to go to seek support for anything; they no longer belonged to a community, held no memories of belonging to one, and were not able to draw on the strengths of the support of their community.

In 2018 and 2020, The Healing Foundation commissioned the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) to report on the numbers and demographic characteristics of Stolen Generations Survivors and their descendants, and of the impact of removal on a variety of health, social and economic factors.

The AIHW analysis found that the Stolen Generations and their families have significantly poorer physical health and over double the rates of mental illness and alcohol abuse compared to that suffered by those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who were not removed. They have also, on average, received a poorer education and are more likely to be unemployed.

Existing model: Veteran Gold Card

A Veteran Gold Card¹ entitles the cardholder to Department of Veterans Affairs funding for all clinically necessary health care needs for all conditions.

Treatment may include:

- treatment at a hospital or day procedure facility
- treatment provided by an allied health professional
- treatment provided by a general practitioner (GP) or specialist
- treatment provided by a dental or optical professional
- medications at the cheaper concession rate
- community nursing
- pathology and medical imaging

Cardholders may also be able to receive some services and support, including:

- counselling
- home help
- medical aids, equipment and modifications
- travel to and from medical appointments
- care services
- energy supplement (automatic)
- Community support from participating businesses and groups

Services and support are free or low cost. Some co-payments apply.

Cardholders are also entitled to a range of additional services and benefits not available to the general population including care coordination and medications.

1 <https://www.dva.gov.au/health-and-treatment/veteran-healthcare-cards/veteran-gold-card>