KBHAC

Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation

# Walking Together Program

## DEDICATION

We dedicate this work to the Kinchela Boys Home (KBH) survivors, descendants and family members who are no longer with us. We acknowledge their pain, grief, loss, strength, courage and wisdom. They walked before us and with us on this journey and have guided this work, giving us strength as we journeyed along. This work is for you and for your families. You are never forgotten.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

KBHAC and Nama Jalu acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands we walk, reside and work on. We recognise that these lands were stolen and that sovereignty was never ceded. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and acknowledge their wisdom, contributions and care for their communities, lands and waterways. We acknowledge all Stolen Generations Survivors, their descendants and families, including those who are no longer with us, those who never made it home and those who are still trying to make it home.

We extend this respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who participated in this project, especially the KBH survivors, descendants, families, staff, and broader KBHAC community who participated in the yarning circles.

KBHAC and Nama Jalu acknowledge the support of the Healing Foundation who funded this work. This program proposal was prepared by Nama Jalu Consulting in collaboration with Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation (KBHAC) and the KBHAC community.

KBHAC thanks the Nama Jalu Consulting Team—Simon Jordan, Cheryl Jackson, Jeffery Amatto, Kieran Sobels, Louise Stanley, Merrick Powell and Holly Kovac—for their work on this project. Nama Jalu thanks KBHAC and the KBH Survivor Community who participated in this project for all of their time and knowledge in developing this program.

NAMA JALU CONSULTING

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# PROGRAM SUMMARY

## BACKGROUND TO THIS PROJECT

The Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation (KBHAC) has been acutely aware that the KBH Survivor community, which includes KBH survivors, their descendants and families, is in **urgent need of a fit-for-purpose cultural healing and wellbeing program**. Although there are existing trauma-based healing and recovery programs, none have been specifically Stolen Generations Survivor/ Descendant designed or tailored to the needs of Stolen Generations survivor communities.

The urgent need for this program is due to the health and ageing of the KBH Survivors who need to be part of this healing work with their descendants and families, and also to the complex needs that continue to adversely impact on the KBH Survivor Community.[1] Compounding this are the challenges the community has identified in accessing support for alcohol, drug, and other individual and family difficulties associated with the impacts of their unique trauma as Stolen Generations Survivors and descendants of Stolen Generations Survivors.[2]

It must be acknowledged that this unique trauma stems from KBH and other Stolen Generations Survivors experiencing and surviving the attempted genocide which was carried out through their forcible removal as children from their families and communities. A major legacy of this survival experience is now experienced as multigenerational trauma impacting on Stolen Generations Survivors' descendants and families.

Towards the end of 2022, after a number of acute individual and family incidents experienced by KBH Survivors, their descendants and families, KBHAC discussed the need for a KBHAC specific cultural rehabilitation program with Nama Jalu Consulting (Nama Jalu), a long-term partner of KBHAC. A proposal for this project was developed and KBHAC approached the Healing Foundation for funding to develop a KBHAC cultural rehabilitation program. Once funding was secured, KBHAC and Nama Jalu began to co-design a program model with the KBHAC community. A working group was formed and it was identified early on that this program needed to get away from the language of 'rehabilitation'.

In designing the program, it was **critical to identify the needs, expectations and desires of KBH survivors, descendants and their families** and reviewing the work KBHAC has been doing to date that aligns with these needs, expectations and desires, acknowledging that it is chronically under-resourced to do this work. Accordingly, we held yarning circles across NSW to collect their input and co-design the **KBHAC Walking Together Program**.

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[1] Part 4, Chapter 13 of the Bringing Them Home: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families Report (HREOC 1997) outlines how the policies that allowed for the forced removal of Indigenous children from their families and communities was genocide as defined under the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide which Australia ratified in 1949 and which came into force in 1951. It did not however legislate to make genocide a crime in Australia until 2002 (Shirley 2004 https://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/AUJlHRights/2004/22.html)

[2] KBHAC's use of the term 'multigenerational trauma' draws on the Healing Foundation's description of 'intergenerational trauma' (https://healingfoundation.org.au/intergenerational-trauma/):

> If Stolen Generations survivors don't have the opportunity to heal from trauma, they're likely to live in a state of distress, which can lead to a range of negative outcomes for themselves and their descendants.
>
> Their children may experience difficulties with attachment, disconnection from their extended families and culture and high levels of stress from family and community members who are dealing with the impacts of trauma. This can create developmental issues for children, who are particularly susceptible to distress at a young age. This creates a cycle of trauma, where the impact is passed from one generation to the next. In Australia, intergenerational trauma predominantly affects the children, grandchildren and future generations of the Stolen Generations.

# CO-DESIGN PROCESS AND YARNING CIRCLES

KBHAC and Nama Jalu conducted **three yarning circles** in **Dubbo**, **Kempsey**, and **Sydney**. To ensure KBH Survivor community members who lived outside these areas could attend, KBHAC organised travel and accommodation, and for those who needed additional support to make it to the yarning circle locations. Each of the yarning circles was attended by 13–21 community members, and **a total of 52 people** were consulted across the three yarns.

While conducting the yarning circles, KBHAC and Nama Jalu also conducted a **literature scan** to ensure that the co-design process and exploration of possible program model elements were grounded in an evidence base. The literature scan informed our understanding of what interventions and approaches are most effective for Aboriginal people and families, and moreover, those who have been impacted by the Stolen Generations. The scan also identified other providers of healing and recovery programs, such as residential rehabilitation models of care and trauma-based recovery programs.

## YARNING CIRCLE FINDINGS

Following the yarning circles, we conducted a thematic analysis of the input provided by the KBHAC community. There were five key findings that emerged strongly across the three yarning circles.

1. The KBHAC community needs **regular opportunities to get together** and have **group yarns** to begin and continue their healing journeys.
2. **Addressing the different types of trauma and experiences** underlying alcohol and drug use and other individual and family challenges, rather than only addressing the presenting behaviours, was considered critical.
3. The KBHAC cultural healing and wellbeing program will need **skilled and dedicated male and female workers** who are active community members and have lived experience relevant to the KBHAC community
4. The KBHAC community needs to continue to place focus on **rebuilding family structures**.
5. The KBHAC community want program components that support them to **share and learn living skills** and support the community to **create employment opportunities** for the KBHAC community.

# PRINCIPLES

The co-design process developed eight foundational principles for the program that were important to the KBHAC community. These are expressed as full sentences in words that spoke to the hearts of KBHAC community members.

Our service is **flexible** and **adaptive**.

Our **KBH survivor and descendant led** service acknowledges and understands the **complex traumas** faced by the KBHAC community.

**Trust, safety, compassion** and a **non-judgemental approach** are the foundations of all support.

“**Culture** and **relationships** are at the heart of everything we do.”

Our service embraces **our truth**.

Our service supports the **whole person** and doesn’t just look at their problems.

Wellbeing focuses on building **strength, knowledge,** and **shared wisdom**.

When we support a person, we also support their **family**.

# THE KBHAC WALKING TOGETHER PROGRAM MODEL

After listening closely to the KBHAC community, examining KBHAC's programs and healing activities and understanding the evidence base in the literature scan, KBHAC and Nama Jalu have developed **The Walking Together Program.**

The name 'Walking Together' reflects what the KBHAC community described about how they would like their healing journey to look. This includes walking together as a community, and also having workers and services walking alongside them, supporting them to navigate the services and service systems they choose to engage with. The idea of walking together acknowledges that having someone alongside you who understands you can be a powerful part in a person's healing journey and that healing is relational.

The Walking Together Program model is a bespoke program for the KBH Community – that is the descendants, partners, and families of the Survivors of KBH - which focuses on trauma recovery, empowerment and individual, family, and collective healing and wellbeing. The program has both a non-residential and residential component to it and can be delivered where KBHAC has offices and in other areas where KBH Community members live.

## A Hub and Spoke Model

The program model can be considered a 'hub and spoke' model. The central and critical 'hub' for program delivery is the **Walking Together Team**. The Walking Together Team holds space for the program's foundational hub layer: regular face-to-face yarning circles. This layer is critical to supporting the healing and wellbeing journeys of the KBH community. These yarning circles include open and introductory yarns to build trust and relationships and group-based yarns (either with the KBH community in full or part, such as Survivors', Descendants', partners', family members', youth, men, or women's yarns).

## The Spokes

The 'spokes' in the Walking Together Program Model consist of two additional layers. In both, the Walking Together Team will use a strengths-based case coordination and support approach to identify peoples' interests and needs in order to link them with relevant healing and wellbeing activities and supports.

**The inner layer** of spokes is to be implemented and facilitated by the Walking Together team as part of regular program delivery. These include the program implementing more specific, therapeutic topic-based yarns. These may draw on experts and specialist consultants, and also peer support and mentoring, with Survivors, descendants and family members leading healing initiatives and introducing cultural activities and skill-sharing. In this inner layer of spokes, also sits the residential component of the Walking Together Model: **The Holding Safe Home.**

The Holding Safe Home has been identified as a critical element in supporting the healing and wellbeing journeys of the KBH Community members.[1] It will respond both to emergencies as they arise as well as working to prevent and intervene early in emerging challenges and crises, thereby reducing the negative effects of crises on the lives of the KBH Community members. The focus of the Holding Safe Home will therefore be on triaging issues at critical times of need as well as contributing to healing, coping capacity and overall wellbeing.

**The outer layer** of spokes is the space where the Walking Together Team will work with other KBHAC programs as well as external partners and organisations to support KBH community members in meeting their healing and wellbeing needs and journeys.

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1 KBH Survivors, Descendants and family members have often reported that they find it hard to find support services in which they feel comfortable, confident and safe. Due to both Survivors' and some descendants' past experiences of institutional abuse and risks associated with re-traumatisation, KBH Survivors and descendants report a tendency to avoid seeking assistance from institutional supports when facing challenges that emerge in their lives. As a result, challenges often escalate into emergencies, at which stage survivors, descendants and family members turn to KBHAC for emergency crisis support.

# THE WALKING TOGETHER PROGRAM: HUB AND SPOKE

# PROGRAM PHASES

This program will be implemented through a phased approach, that builds upon itself, and which builds trust and supports for KBH survivors, descendants and their families to walk together on a healing and wellbeing journey. This phased approach will include:

- Recruitment of a **Walking Together Program Team** that will work with KBH Survivors, descendants and community across New South Wales, who are skilled in trauma work, active community members, and ideally have lived experience relevant to the KBH Community. This team will include:
    - 1 FTE Walking Together Program Manager
    - 1 FTE Trauma Practice Lead
    - 2 FTE Walking Together Workers (male and female)
- Holding **regular face-to-face yarning circles** facilitated by the Walking Together workers, in KBHAC's Sydney Office and across New South Wales regional centres, with support from KBH community members alongside recruited therapeutic consultants and specialists, including Elders, psychologists, art therapists and AOD recovery experts.
- Using yarning **to identify specific needs of program participants.**
- Establishing the **Holding Safe Home** once the core of the Walking Together Program has been established. This will include recruitment of
    - 1 FTE Clinical Social Worker
    - 2 FTE Walking Together Workers (male and female)
    - 1 FTE Residential Worker (KBHAC community member)
    - 2 Part-time Coaches/ Counsellors
    - 4 Part-time Peer Support Workers (KBH Survivors and descendants).
- Using a **strengths-based case coordination and support approach** to engage program participants with other program activities and initiatives such as:
    - cultural activities
    - skill-sharing and development
    - peer support and mentoring
    - the KBHAC Holding Safe Home emergency housing and respite support.
- Supporting **KBH Survivors and descendants to lead healing and wellbeing initiatives**, which may include family rebuilding, art and music therapy, Sorry Business, grief and loss support and cultural activities.
- Establishing **relationships and connections to other services and organisations** that can support the needs of the KBHAC community, with the Walking Together workers advocating for the specific needs of community members and ensuring any referrals to these external supports and services are culturally safe and supported.

# PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

This is a multi-year program with a staged implementation program over three years. A detailed implementation program for how the model will be rolled out, including a budget for this implementation and the ongoing role of monitoring and evaluation of the program is provided at the end of this summary.

## RESPONDING TO GAPS IN SERVICE DELIVERY AND ADVOCATING FOR STOLEN GENERATIONS SURVIVORS AND THEIR FAMILIES

The Walking Together Program highlights and responds to the gap in the mainstream and Aboriginal service system of programs and services that understand the specific experiences and multigenerational trauma of Stolen Generations survivors, their descendants and families. Therapeutic rehabilitation, recovery and healing services are already underfunded and difficult to access, but in the case of mainstream services, many also take a Western bio-medical approach that does not work for Stolen Generations communities. Many services, particularly those that are residential, have the potential to retraumatise survivors and their descendants.

This program proposal and model advocates for the critical need for Stolen Generations community members to have active involvement in and choices regarding their access to services, rather than being passive recipients of service delivery and interventions. The service system in Australia has failed, and continues to fail, these communities. There is now an urgent need to tailor programs to meet their specific needs and match each individual's level of readiness in terms of where they are at on their journey of healing and wellbeing.

We hope that programs and services that already exist in the rehabilitation, recovery and healing space can learn and benefit from this model and its consideration of the Stolen Generations experience.

**When my children went off track, their needs were not met, going through mental health, domestic violence, housing. The things they needed were not there. That's why we need more than caseworkers, we need advocates with lived experience and a safe place to go to.**

**– KBHAC community member**

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