MEDIA RELEASE

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NSW HOSTS FIRST OCHRE HEALING FORUM

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Victor Dominello said the first OCHRE Healing Forum, which took place in Sydney today at the University of NSW, marked a crucial step in advancing the dialogue about trauma and healing and developing best practice policy responses.

The OCHRE Forum, “Mapu Yaan Gurri, Mapu Marrunggirr - Healing Our Way”, which reflects the goal of enabling all Aboriginal people to live healthy and purposeful lives, was hosted in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation.

Participants included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Mick Gooda, NSW Mental Health Commissioner John Feneley and NSW/ACT Stolen Generation Council Chairperson Matilda House, and 66 organisations were represented.

“Aboriginal people who have suffered trauma need to find ways to reclaim their culture and rebuild pride in their identity. The forum provided an outlet for discussions about healing and will inform the NSW Government’s approach to future policies and practices.

“During the Ministerial Taskforce consultations which informed OCHRE, the NSW Government’s Plan for Aboriginal affairs, healing was identified as a critical issue by many Aboriginal people across the state.

“Today was about listening to Aboriginal people and experts in the field to understand what role government can play in addressing trauma and loss of culture.

“It was also an opportunity to learn about what works – whether it is the courage of the men from Kinchela Boys Home recording their stories through film or the ingenuity of the women from Lismore’s Wake Up Time Weavers – it’s about sharing examples of healing.

“In addition to the forum, other OCHRE initiatives which support Healing include Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests and Local Decision Making.

“I thank the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation and the 200 attendees who came from all over NSW and interstate to be part of the forum,” Mr Dominello said.

Mr Richard Weston, CEO of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation said acknowledging trauma and its roots in the history of colonisation is the first step towards healing.

“Healing from trauma enables individuals to gain control of their lives and create positive pathways forward to a more hopeful future. There are many examples of positive changes for our people because of healing programs.

“NSW should be congratulated for being the only state or territory that has built Healing into its central policy for Aboriginal affairs. Let’s hope other governments follow their lead.”


MEDIA: Matt Dawson 0427 145 575