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## Conference Papers

### Session WR 3.3 Identity, Wellbeing and Inter-generational trauma

1. Meegan Kilcullen, Anne Swinbourne and Yvonne Cadet-James: *Cultural identity and mental health: lessons from older generations*

[Full paper](#) | [Audio](#) | [Video](#) | [Slideshow](#)

It has been argued that identity is a pre-requisite for mental health for Indigenous people. Indeed, having a strong cultural identity has been identified as a protective mechanism for mental health. In order to maintain health and wellbeing, it is critical to understand the factors that impact upon cultural identity. Culture, like cultural identity, is a dynamic, ever-changing entity, with individuals within a culture absorbing and integrating new knowledge into the old. Within this transformative process, cultural identity reflects a sense of belonging or relationship with other members of the same culture. Knowing one's cultural identity provides the basis from which to explore and understand the world and facilitates meaning-making in one's life. Bearing this in mind, there are many lessons to be learned from the older generation in terms of developing and sustaining cultural identity. The current study explored factors that encompassed and impacted upon mental health and cultural identity in a group of urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. A theme of connectedness emerged as reflecting a unique contribution to Indigenous mental health and cultural identity. The role of connectedness to country, family and kinship, knowledge and social support were highlighted. This information has implications both for developing and sustaining mental health and thus cultural identity of young Indigenous people, but also provides a basis for the development of culturally safe programs to positively impact upon the health and wellbeing of Indigenous people.

**Author bio:** Meegan Kilcullen is a psychologist who is currently a PhD student at James Cook University, Townsville. She has conducted research projects under the supervision of Dr Anne Swinbourne, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Psychology, and Professor Yvonne Cadet-James, Chair of Indigenous Australian Studies, James Cook University. Her Honours research project explored resilience and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander grandmothers raising their grandchildren. The PhD research project has extended the focus to urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders understanding of mental health and cultural identity.

2. Reuben Bolt: *The intergenerational impact of the 'story' of the stolen generation*

[Full paper](#) | [Audio](#) | [Video](#) | [Slideshow](#)

This presentation is premised on the idea that culture is passed onto others in story form. The stories, regardless of the many truths that underpin them, provide the foundation for one's sense of self. Stories also become resources for identity construction processes that occur in conversation with others. Dr Bolt provides a succinct presentation of the methods of qualitative analysis used in his PhD research, how they were applied to the data, and how his status as a member of the Aboriginal community under study not only shaped the Aboriginal identities constructed within the formal research interview, but also how it shaped various aspects of the research process itself. The presentation then focuses on two case studies to show how the 'story' of the stolen generation transcends the generations and continues to impact the personal and the family. The presentation concludes with some commentary on what this means in the context of Aboriginality and the possible future of urban Aboriginal communities.

**Author bio:** Dr Reuben Bolt is a descendant of the Wandandian and Ngarigo peoples and holds the position lecturer at Nura Gili, the University of New South Wales. He is the first Indigenous PhD graduate of the Faculty of Health Sciences, the University of Sydney, has ten years teaching experience across six universities in New South Wales and has worked on various research projects within Aboriginal communities. His research interest is Indigenous knowledge and identity.

3. Stuart Sutherland and Gillian Brannigan: *Bottom Up Top Down: Funding The Stolen Generation Sector*

[Full paper](#) | [Audio](#) | [Video](#) | [Slideshow](#)

The needs of Stolen Generations are complex and challenging, intergenerational and informed by multiple traumas. These issues are at the core of the dysfunction and poor outcomes that we see reflected in the infamous health and life expectancy gaps facing Australia's First Nations peoples. The realities faced by many Stolen Generations and their organisations are not commonly understood and are far more complex than just health issues. Utilising experience and wisdom from the ground up should be an essential component of best practice decision making to produce better outcomes for all parties involved - the public service, service providers and clients/members. Valuable insights that could inform better practice are lost while organisations delivering services for Stolen Generations spend time and resources fulfilling tasks that may have little relevance to their actual needs. Government as a policy and funding body often do not recognize or except experience and wisdom. More often than not Government act on the demands of those how yell the loudest. Top down -bottom Up management is a widely accepted management system with most successful business deploying this management style. This system utilizes expertise no matters were it is within the organization. This is the follow of ideas and risk taking are not only the senior management but by all staff. Yet is Australia's biggest employer, the Australian Public Services management is based on a hierarchical system where only senior management makes decisions. This practice extents though to the way in which funding for service delivery in the Non-Government sector is distributed. This process is like two tectonic plates, they are joined but have opposing forces. This means that often one or the other only achieves what it wants when they apply enough force to overcome the other plate. Sometimes this forms beautiful mountains but more often there is just heart break.

**Author bio:** Gillian Brannigan is the SGA's National Coordinator having worked in the Stolen Generations sector for nearly ten years. Gillian worked as the Link-Up Qld Promotions Coordinator where she worked closely with the Link-Up Qld Support Group. Gillian was the Assistant Director at Musgrave Park Cultural Centre overseeing the Annual NAIDOC Family Fun Day at Musgrave Park in 2007. She was a consultant for the Northern Territory Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation assisting with their successful tender for the Link-Up service in the Top End. Gillian also facilitated the 2008 and 2009 National Link Up Forums in Adelaide and Broome, the first as part of her employment

#### Themes

- Education
- Health
- IT for young and old
- Wellbeing & resilience
- Employment, development, enterprise
- Connecting generations
- Housing & homelessness
- Language

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with Social Health Section of OATSIH where she was also involved in drafting the Link Up and BTH and Link Up Counsellor Handbooks. Gillian was the non-Indigenous-Chair of the National Sorry Day Committee 2004-2006 and a member since 2001. Gillian is a founding member of the Stolen Generations Alliance and coordinated their Inaugural General Meeting in Darwin on October 2007 as well each subsequent Annual Forum since then. Gillian is committed to walking with, working with and learning from Stolen Generations. She is continuously inspired by their strength, humour, generosity and been deeply moved by their stories. The Stolen Generations Alliance - Australians for Truth Justice and Healing, is the peak advocacy body for Stolen Generations and their families across Australia. It was formed in 2007 by a majority of previous National Sorry Day Committee (NSDC) members, affiliates and representatives from Western Australia, Northern Territory, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, New South Wales, Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania.