

Media release

27 May 2024

Grassroots Action Palmerston and Caritas Australia echo ‘Now More Than Ever’ call this Reconciliation Week

This year the theme for Reconciliation Week is Now More Than Ever, a theme that reminds us that, no matter what, the fight for justice and the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will – and must – continue.

In the run up to Sorry Day and Reconciliation Week, Caritas Australia visited Grassroots Action Palmerston, whose Aunties run the Grassroots Youth Engagement (GYE) program.

GYE is an Aboriginal-led program initiated by local Elder Serena Dalton that partners with local businesses to employ young people in a supported environment. It targets young people who are most at risk of falling through the cracks, including young people who have been involved in the youth justice system. The program provides young people with cultural security through wrap-around mentoring support and cultural activities.

During the visit Caritas Australia was reminded of the enduring impact of intergenerational trauma as a devastating outcome of the Stolen Generations. Depression and anxiety, PTSD, and alcohol or drug abuse, as well as poorer health outcomes and higher rates of incarceration, are all recognised impacts of intergenerational trauma.

Kat Lee General Manager at Grassroots Action Palmerston said, “A lot of people have a misconstrued idea of what intergenerational trauma is, and do not understand that it is still happening today. The misplacement and removal of families has flowed onto the youth we deal with, and that is why there are such high levels of incarceration. There are also a lot of special needs or sensory issues that have not been diagnosed.”

“But at the root they are kids, good kids and loving kids that just want someone to love and respect them. They have been robbed of childhoods that we take for granted and that is what we are trying to provide for them. We just want to know what their passions are and how we can help to support that so they can be meaningful members of the community.”

Kirsty Robertson CEO of Caritas Australia said, “We are committed to working in close partnership First Australian-led programs that focus on intergenerational healing, strengthening cultural identity and spirituality, livelihood opportunities, and advocacy. We do so because programs that are First Australian-led work to undo the pain and damage wrought by Australia’s long history of making decisions for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The way the GYE program reaches some of the most disengaged and traumatised young people in Palmerston is testament to that.”

Caritas Australia has been working with First Australian partners since 1972. It supports 7 programs across 6 local partners that are designed and led by First Australians, with 18,617 program participants in the year to June 2023.

Caritas Australia’s First Australian partners include: Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation, Djilpin Arts, Aboriginal Carbon Foundation, Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation (KBHAC), Grassroots Action Palmerston, and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait

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