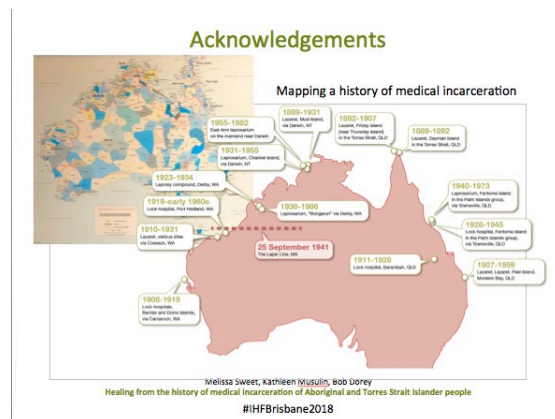


**Healing from the history of medical incarceration**  
**Melissa Sweet, Kathleen Musulin, Bob Dorey**  
**#IHFBrisbane2018**  
**11 October 2018**

**SLIDE 1. Acknowledgements**



I would like to begin by acknowledging the Turrbul People, the traditional custodians of this land.

I acknowledge Elders, past and present, and future emerging generations.

I also acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues here today, as well as those in Carnarvon, Western Australia -- Kathleen Musulin and Bob Dorey, who are co-authors.

Warmest thanks to Janine Mohamed, CEO of the Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives, for supporting me to be here today, and to Richard Weston and the Healing Foundation.

As this map shows, for almost a century, from the late 1800s, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were surveilled and incarcerated for infectious diseases, particularly

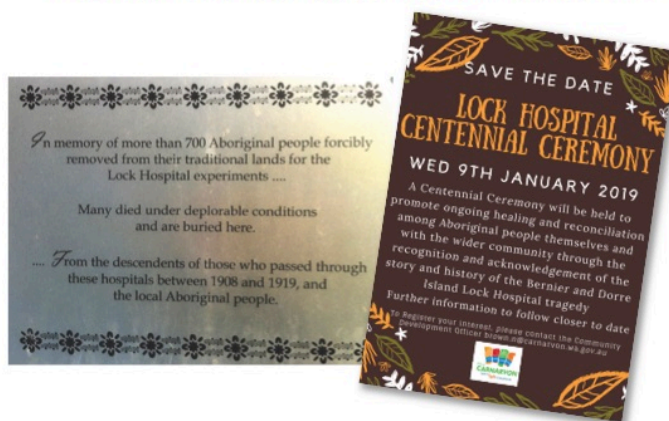
sexually transmissible infections and leprosy -- in multiple sites across northern Australia.

These systems of racially-based medical incarceration were largely portrayed in public and government debate at the time as benevolent and humanitarian.

However, research and Indigenous oral histories have shown they inflicted physical, mental, social, emotional, cultural and spiritual trauma across multiple generations.

## Slide 2

### Historical truth telling is a health intervention



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I invite you to take a few moments to acknowledge those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples taken from their families and country, as part of this little known history.

Think too of the impact on their families, and their descendants – and their relationships with health services.

This plaque on the left is on Dorre Island, one of the few public acknowledgements of the several hundred Aboriginal people exiled to the remote Bernier and Dorre Islands between 1908 and 1919.

I also invite you to join us in Carnarvon on the 9 January next year, when an important healing ceremony will be held.

It will be 100 years to the day, since the last of those people were brought back to the mainland.

The ceremony is being organised by a group that includes descendants, community members, Shire of Carnarvon staff, and researchers. The local hospital, library and other organisations have also supported historical truth telling and acknowledgement around this history.

### Slide 3

#### What can health services do?



- Purposeful storytelling
- Projects of acknowledgement and healing
- Preservation of sites and related histories
- Reparation and justice

***"We must do much more to acknowledge and address these histories of medical incarceration – BUT we also need to work together to overcome contemporary systems of oppression."***

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Here are Kathleen Musulin, her daughters and granddaughters in Sacred Heart Church at Beagle Bay, reclaiming their family history.

Kathleen's grandfather left Beagle Bay as a young man, travelling 1900 kms south in search of his mother, after being told she was taken to the island lock hospitals.

On that day in church, these three generations felt good, connecting to ancestors and their family story. Kathleen says

this journey of connecting with the past has been empowering.

The lock hospital memorial project of Carnarvon offers lessons for health services and professionals seeking to embed cultural safety across their organisations.

They can do this:

- by supporting and engaging with projects of historical truth telling and healing
- by establishing a Day of Acknowledgement or a similar mechanism to acknowledge their historic and ongoing role in harmful colonising practices
- by following the lead of the Australian Psychological Society in making an apology for their roles in such histories
- and by taking a leadership role in wider advocacy efforts to support the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.