



## **ADM and AEF launch project for Aboriginal women**

*Loss, Grief & Trauma Care Pilot Project for Aboriginal Women begins*

Sydney, 4 August 2017

Aboriginal Evangelical Fellowship Australia (AEF) and Anglican Deaconess Ministries (ADM) have come together to design a Loss, Grief and Trauma Care Pilot Project for Aboriginal Women.

The 11-month project begins this week, and will be rolled out initially across Queensland, NSW and Victoria. It aims to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to explore their experiences of loss, grief and trauma, and facilitate healing through the use of creative tools – all within a biblical framework.

The idea for the project stemmed from the AEF Women's National Conference in November 2016. Speaking at the conference, Keren Masters, clinical counsellor and lecturer, addressed the historical and clinical contexts for Aboriginal experience of loss, grief and trauma, and outlined a biblical foundation for understanding and responding.

"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have experienced, and continue to experience, profound loss, grief and trauma," explains Kathie Naden, Secretary, AEF Eastern Area Ladies. "Losses are at a personal level through experiences such as family violence, substance abuse, children removed into care, incarceration, suicide, and unemployment. Losses are also at a societal or community level, through experiences including intergenerational loss and grief, loss of land, loss of culture, loss of language, stolen generations, racism, and legal exclusion."

In helping to address these traumas at the conference, AEF member and artist, Ngardarb Francine Riches, worked with the women present using tools of creative expression for healing.

The Loss, Grief and Trauma Care Pilot Project will take the learning and skills taught at the conference and share them with women (both Christian and non-Christian) throughout the AEF Women's network in the Eastern states. Under a train-the-trainer structure, around six pairs of women will be trained as volunteer Master Trainers, who will then carry out training in their local communities. Training materials will be developed – including a manual, workbook, presentation resources, and creative expression tools.

An AEF Project Manager will assist with implementation of the project, while ADM will provide project design expertise, implementation guidance, and finances. After 11 months, AEF and ADM will together evaluate the impact of the project and consider expanding it in the future.

"We hope this project, with possible continuation beyond the pilot, will be a small step toward wholeness and flourishing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in AEF's networks," says ADM's Director of Mercy & Justice Ministries, Margo Leach.

She continues: "We believe that by seeking to recognise, acknowledge, understand and help process these losses, women will take positive steps forward on the path towards healing. When we place this experience of loss within a Christian theology – with ultimate hope being found in the radical love and healing of Christ – women can experience a deeper, holistic healing that brings hope for the future."

### **For interviews or further information, contact:**

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