

Stronger In Our Way

East Kimberley Men's Forum 2025



Executive Summary

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ICN 35



Introduction

About the 'Stronger In Our Way' men's forum



'Stronger in our Way', the second annual East Kimberley men's forum, took place at Kununurra Waringarri Aboriginal Corporation (KWAC) on the 28th and 29th October 2025. The forum, attended by around 60 men across two days, featured guest presenters and local men who shared their own stories of trauma and healing, creating a safe space for all men to engage in meaningful discussion about how men can restore their positions as role models and support safe, healthy families. Facilitators emphasised that the forum was a safe space for men to say whatever they want, telling participants:

'We have responsibility and obligations to look at ways to build a strong community'

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

About the forum

Stronger in our Way, the second annual East Kimberley men's forum, took place at Kununurra Waringarri Aboriginal Corporation (KWAC) on the 28th and 29th October 2025 and was attended by around 60 men over the two days. During the forum guest presenters and local men shared their stories of trauma and healing, creating a safe space for all men to engage in meaningful discussion about how men can restore their positions as role models and support safe, healthy families.

Themes in discussion

While a diverse range of men shared their stories, there were a number of common themes in the traumatic experiences they shared as well as the resilience they drew from to transform their lives and become role models for their sons and other men.

Key themes in discussion, many of which are interconnected and are a direct result of government policies since colonisation, included traumatic childhood experiences and loss; child removal; child sexual abuse; family violence and other violence; substance misuse; lack of emotional intelligence and regulation; cultural breakdown; and negative peer influences.

Speakers and participants noted some commonality in the factors that supported men to heal from trauma and transform their lives, including positive cultural role models/mentors; accountability; reconnection with Country and culture; recovery from alcohol and other drugs health and fitness; and goal setting.

With concerns about recent increases in youth crime, discussion also focussed on how men engage boys and become positive role models to them. Key suggestions included men coming together to lead change; men's healing; establishing a father and sons' group; mentoring and men and boys' trips on country. Discussion also highlighted how toxic and negative community attitudes and behaviour can bring men down and are used as an excuse to discourage efforts to engage young people in activities to strengthen cultural connection.

Trauma	Healing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Government policies since colonisation• Use of alcohol & other drugs• Traumatic childhood experiences and loss• Child removal• Child sexual abuse• Family violence and other violence• Substance misuse• Lack of emotional intelligence and regulation• Cultural breakdown• Negative peer influences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Positive cultural role models/mentors• Accountability• Reconnection with Country and culture;• Recovery from alcohol and other drugs• Health and fitness• Goal setting• Men coming together to lead change• Men's healing• Establishing a father and sons' group• Mentoring and men and boys' trips on country

REFLECTIONS:

Reflection on input in discussions over the two days identifies a number of ideas from the men that should be considered in Strong Men's, Stronger Families and other programs that engage men in Kununurra:

INSIGHTS FROM THE FORUM

The impacts of trauma on men are significant. Men need the opportunity to share their story and engage in collective healing. Services need to be genuinely trauma-informed and empower men to lead their own healing. **1**

Men need structured opportunities to come together for positive interaction – not just to engage with service support. The Forum demonstrated the power of men connecting and proved that by collectively standing together they can challenge negative stereotypes. This could be maintained through a local men's group. **2**

Men need healing before they can support healing for their sons and families. Men find healing through telling their story, going on Country and through cultural activities including dance, art, music and learning language. Programs and services should maximise opportunities to support healing. **3**

Young men need positive Aboriginal male role models – we need to consider ways to connect younger men with mentors. **4**

Fathers and sons/men and boys' camps are strongly encouraged, where men take their sons (and other boys) on Country and teach them to fish and engage with cultural activities. **5**

There's a need for parenting support for the parents of young people coming into contact with criminal justice. **6**

We need to overcome barriers men face to accessing health support. Services can work with the Men's Health Clinic to support warm referrals for local men. **7**

Men identified the qualities of a good man and a good Dad – these should be considered as themes in men's programs. **8**

It's important that men engage with breath work and cultural activities for emotional regulation. These should be designed into men's programs. **9**
