

July 2018

NAIDOC 2018

IEP extends a big congratulations to all [2018 NAIDOC Award winners](#)

Strong Sistas keeping culture safe



In partnership with Serco and Skillinvest, Indigenous Employment Partners hosted its inaugural NAIDOC week event on Friday 6 July and recognised seven remarkable Aboriginal women.

Aunty Di Kerr, Traditional Custodian, Wurundjeri

Antoinette Braybrook, CEO Djirra, Kuku Yalanji

Cheryl Vickery-Nicholls, Community elder, Yorta Yorta

Shona Stewart, City of Whittlesea, Wiradjuri/Latdje Latdje

Katrina Harrison, Skillinvest, Palawa

Leanne Sumner, Cultural Advisor and Educator, Gunditjmarra

Karen Lovett, Artist and Arts Teacher, Gunditjmarra

Each of these amazing women has a very different story, but one resounding similarity; They're exceedingly strong and resilient women and have risen out of adversity to become highly capable community carers, advocates, educators and leaders, and they all possess an unwavering commitment to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

These proud Aboriginal women are what many would call, cultural care takers – women who take great care to keep Aboriginal culture safe, strong and alive.

In coming together for NAIDOC week, these women all graciously accepted two beautiful awards. One being an extraordinary butterfly hand-crafted and lovingly painted by *Aboriginal Steel Art* and the other gift, a piece of handmade artwork produced by Aboriginal men currently detained in correction facilities in Queensland.

It was such a kind and thoughtful gesture for the incarcerated men to make these gifts for the women, and in return the women insisted that a piece of artwork be produced and sent back to the men, as a sign of their gratitude.

It was a beautiful display of the kindness that exists between Aboriginal communities across Australia and such a pleasure for attendees to witness.

Another highlight of the event was seeing the interaction between Aboriginal community elders who hadn't seen each other for years. One award recipient, Cheryl Vickery-Nicholls upon receiving her recognition gifts was greeted by a hand-stretched out in the crowd and a voice saying, "are you Stella Nicholls daughter?". When Cheryl replied "yes, I am", the Aboriginal women elders sitting in the front row, all began to clap and gave Cheryl a big hug. Breaking into cheery conversation about who knew who and so on. It really was a beautiful sight to see these women reconnecting and discussing who was related to who and reminiscing over good times.

This beautiful unplanned situation really brought warmth to the event and the energy about the place was buzzing with bubups (meaning *children*, *Boon wurrung*) being cuddled and lots of people chatting away about all manner of things.

In all, this first NAIDOC week event for Indigenous Employment Partners was all we could ask for - A room spilling over with more than 50 guests, great memorable moments, heartfelt stories followed by tears of joy and sadness, delicious food from our friends at Kinfolk and a whole heap of great surprises.

Did we mention that Indigenous Employment Partners, Director, Sara Stuart, blew the lid off the place with her amazing MCing?

Well, let's just say, this proud Kamilaroi woman with four beautiful children and two businesses under her belt was a pretty big highlight too. Inspiring us all with her beauty, strength and charm.

Much like all the other amazing Aboriginal women we recognised on the day.

