

Media Release

The Hon Gayle Tierney MP
Minister for Skills and TAFE
Minister for Regional Development



Wednesday, 8 November 2023

CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE IN FIRST NATIONS TRAINING

Leaders in Koorie education and employment were recognised at the annual Wurreker Awards, celebrating the success of Victoria's First Nations people in Vocational Education and Training.

Minister for Skills and TAFE Gayle Tierney congratulated the nominees and winners at the annual awards event, held at the Aboriginal Advancement League in Thornbury. The Wurreker Awards recognise the outstanding individuals and organisations that support Koorie people to thrive in vocational training.

One of four people receiving individual awards was proud Gunai woman Joanne Brunt, who received the Public Sector Employee Award. Through her work on Latrobe City Council's *Steps to the Future Indigenous Employment Program*, Joanne has supported more than 100 people into jobs in health services, construction, land management and administration, with a retention rate of 90 per cent.

Taking the award for Koorie Training Provider was the Victoria Aboriginal Community Services Association, which has supported 227 students gain meaningful employment and 15 students into higher education.

The Gordon Institute of TAFE also received one of the training provider awards - recognising the support its Kitjarra Wurrun-Ngeen Centre provides to the more than 200 Indigenous students attending the TAFE, supporting them to achieve their full potential.

The Wurreker Awards are delivered by the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI) together with the Government, delivering initiatives and programs to support Aboriginal Victorians access education and training in a culturally responsive environment.

With a long-standing relationship, VAEAI and the Government together deliver the Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan, which sets the vision for all Aboriginal Victorians to achieve their learning aspirations, and the Wurreker Strategy to support Koorie learners in vocational education and training.

To see the full list of winners, visit <https://www.vaeai.org.au/wurreker-awards-2023>.

Quote attributable to Minister for Skills and TAFE Gayle Tierney

"These awards recognise people and organisations delivering culturally appropriate and co-designed vocational education for First Nations people and the impact on student outcomes – congratulations to all the winners."

Quote attributable to Minister for Treaty and First Peoples Natalie Hutchins

"We're excited to celebrate the excellence of First Nations learners in Victoria's training sector. We'll continue to place inclusion and best practices at the forefront – congratulations to all!"

Quote attributable to VAEAI President Geraldine Atkinson

"The Wurreker Awards are a highlight of the Koorie education calendar. Congratulations to the finalists and the Wurreker Award Winners, thank you for your work and dedication, for creating pathways, meaningful employment and culturally relevant programs that enrich our learners and our Community."

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