

MEDIA RELEASE - SEQ NAIDOC 2008

Theme: **YOUR VOICE – OUR FUTURE**

Local Community Shines at SEQ NAIDOC Gala Ball

This year's SEQ NAIDOC Gala Ball recognised a year of Murri and Torres Strait Islander achievement, especially through the presentation of seven distinguished services awards across the areas of Organisation, Individual, Youth Leadership, Sport, Visual Arts, Material Arts, Business and Award of Excellence. Host of the evening, Trish Williams, CEO of First Contact Corp, was very gratified to see over 300 guests enjoy a three course dinner at the Grand Ballroom Hilton Hotel Brisbane.

"It is very re-assuring to see the representatives of the entire community to come together to celebrate our history, our culture and the achievement of Individuals within the region," said Trish.

The evening's celebrations were enhanced by special performances by Lexine Solomon who sang her hit song "I belong" and the Nunuckle Yuggera and Wagga traditional dance troupes of Brisbane. Special screening of the Deborah Mailman film, Third Note was also seen compliments of the Colourise NAIDOC Film Festival and Murri Image community video and film service.

Celebrity and National NAIDOC Committee member, Leah Purcell contributed a thoughtful keynote speech during the main course while Master of Ceremonies, Billy Williams made guests keenly aware of the history of NAIDOC and the local community.

"This years National NAIDOC theme lays down the foundation for Australia to reflect on the principle of a "Fair Go" for all Australians as it lays down the challenge to government to bridge the gap and bring about sustainable changes in our communities. The national apology has opened a new chapter in Australias future history books which is yet to be written", said Trish.

"The 2008 SEQ Regional theme "Your Voice our Future was developed to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to continue to actively have a voice in the shaping of this great state and nation. The struggle for our people will always be there, we just address it in modern ways. We all must never loose sight of that and we must never loose our voice, we want a fair go for all Australians", said Trish .

She laid down the challenge to young people as the future leaders of our communities and this nation to remain strong to their culture, the struggle and step up as the road to Bridging the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and mainstream Australia had no finish line.

A special Memorial Presentation compiled by 13 year old Christine Williams was also conducted during the evening in memory of the late Father, Robbie Williams who passed away in December 2007.

"The late Robbie Williams, Chairperson of First Contact, the SEQ Regional NAIDOC Body for the last 11 years, Local Government Councillor, community advocate was very instrumental in his work with community and government to bring about the advancement of services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people", said Pastor Billy Williams.

The 2008 SEQ NAIDOC 2008 Award winners are:

Gundala Kindergarten Assoc Inc - Distinguished Services for an Organisation

Established more than 10 years ago and based on Brisbanes east side (Wynnum North) has provided a dedicated and committed service to Aboriginal families especially in the area of early childhood development over a number of years.

Michael Connolly - Distinguished Services for an Individual

A community advocate has been instrumental in raising funds to assist many of our community needs in the areas from overseas sports travel to medical equipment. More widely know for the development and introduction of the "Aboriginal Numberplates" and additionally his work as an artist with his unique style of artwork and craftsmanship, didgeridoo playing and storytelling.

De Greer - Distinguished Arts Industry Visual

De is the creator of Yindi Arts which is a contemporary display of her handiwork through greeting cards, graphic development and paintings. Her works are an expression of her stories based on culture and symbolism.

Sally Terare-Hartley - Distinguished Arts Industry Material

A self taught freelance contemporary artist who specialises in canvas paintings, murals and designs on glass, porcelain and ornamental works.

SEQ Indigenous Chamber of Commerce - Distinguished Services for Business

They provides a excellent showcase for successful Indigenous Business people and their business by connecting Indigenous and non-Indigenous business to promote, support and guide Indigenous business success in the Australian Community. They have representation across six regions, Brisbane, Caboolture, Sunshine Coast, Gold Coast, Ipswich and Toowoomba.

David Walker - Distinguished Services for Sports

He brought home gold as part of the triumphant Australian Basketball Special World Olympic Team.

Cristilee Louitt - Distinguished Services for Youth Leadership

She has made an outstanding contribution to the advancement of State and National Youth Leadership in Australia through her advocacy to Government in the last 5 years. Working in the Office of Youth, Department of Communities she has also successfully coordinated the Young Leaders Forum Initiatives held in Brisbane and Cairns yearly.

Billy Williams - Award of Excellence

His professional career spans over 12 years at local, state and federal levels. He is widely known as a Cross Cultural Communicator and facilitator with AFL, NRL, Soccer Australia, Basketball and Cricket Australia, business and many state sporting organisations. Founder of Dyiiyaan a Ministry based on Brisbanes Northside, which conducts many successful community initiatives for families and young people. He is also currently undertaking theological studies at the Qld Baptist Maylons College.

The evening concluded on a high with the community geared up for a week of cultural events and activities across the region to mark NAIDOC Celebrations for South East Queensland which will officially kick off at 10am on Monday 7 July 2008 at the Cultural Forecourt, Southbank Parklands in Brisbane City.

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