



**NAIDOC
WEEK**
**50 YEARS
DEADLY**
5-12 JULY 2026

Cultural Warning: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people reading this email or blogpost are advised that it may contain stories of people who have passed away.

Dear Friends,

This year's NAIDOC Week theme is '50 years of deadly' celebrating and recognising the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Last week when I put out a call for nominations, Ben Carpentier and Darren Krause were right off the mark!

Ben said, *"It's just over 50 years to the day that Gurindji man **Vincent Lingiari** (1908 - 1988) was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia for his services to the Aboriginal people, particularly his leadership role in the Wave Hill Walk Off (making him something of a modern-day Moses!). But it's also 50 years since the Baptist Mission was established in which he was a key leader. Almost exactly 50 years deadly!"*

Darren nominated **Albert Namatjira** (1902–1959), a Western Arrernte man from the Hermannsburg (Ntaria) Mission in Central Australia. Namatjira fits '50 years of deadly', Darren says, because *"his impact has gone far beyond his lifetime. He changed the way Australia sees Aboriginal art, opened doors for future Indigenous artist, and stood strong in the face of systemic injustice"*. (I was not aware he was the first Aboriginal person granted restricted citizenship in 1957 which gave him the right to vote, own property, and buy alcohol, but only by legally separating him legally from his own people.) *"His legacy continues through his descendants, the Hermannsburg School, and the recognition of Indigenous Art as central—not marginal—to Australian culture."*

Merilyn Carey nominated Yankunytjatjara woman **Lowitja O'Donoghue** (1932 – 2024). *"She was inspiring as a strong leader," Merilyn says, "which included being the founding chairperson of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the first Indigenous Australian to address the United Nations General Assembly. She was the Australian of the Year in 1984 and during her time working in Canberra she attended evening services in our church. Despite her high positions she remained humble, warm and friendly. I think she is worthy of celebration."*

Siriphan Hellier also nominated Lowitja O'Donoghue and Albert Namatijira, and two more people; David Unaipon and Evonne Goolagong Cawley.

Ngarridjeri man **David Unaipon** (1872 – 1967) is portrayed on the \$50 note. He spent much of his life touring Australia as a preacher and speaking at schools and churches about Aboriginal culture. His most significant work, *Legendary Tales of the Australian Aborigines*, from 1925, was misappropriated by anthropologist William Ramsay Smith. (In 2001 a new edition, *Myths and Legends of the Australian Aborigines*, was published under Unaipon's name.) He was also an inventor registering 10 patents between 1909 and 1944, including a new sheep shearing mechanism and predicting that an aeroplane could be developed based on the same aerodynamic principles as a boomerang, and researching the polarization of light in the discipline of physics. He had conservative views about assimilation and clashed with more progressive Aboriginal activists in later life.

Wiradjuri woman **Evonne Goolagong Cawley** (1951-) is a former professional tennis player and was ranked as the world no. 1 in 1976 in women's singles by the Women's Tennis Association. She won 86 WTA Tour-level singles titles, including seven singles major and 46 doubles titles, including seven doubles majors. At 19, Goolagong won the French Open singles and the Australian Open doubles championships. She is the only woman to beat Margaret Court, Martina Navratilova and Chris Evert in a grand slam final.

Sally Mordike, part of the Morning Prayers Group, nominated Nyikina man **Mark Coles Smith** (1987-), also known as Kalaji, and Arrente and Arabana man **Aaron Pederson** (1970-) who, she says, *"both bring integrity and break stereotypes on mainstream tv, in their (joint) role as detective Jay Swan."*

Damien Kelly's recommendation for a deadly achiever is Yorta Yorta and Yuin woman **Prof. Deborah Cheetham Fraillon** (1964-) who, he says, *"was a comedian; has been and may still be a Baptist, is a lady who likes ladies (in January 2023 she and conductor Nicolette Fraillon were married) and is a fabulous opera singer and composer of a great first First Nation's opera which is both moving and evocative."* Cheetham's opera *Pecan Summer*, based on the 1939 Cummeragunja walk-off, premiered in October 2010. She wrote, composed, and performed in the production by the Short Black Opera Company. It was the first opera written by an Indigenous Australian with an all-Indigenous cast.

Alex Grove nominated Bununggu and Warraingu women **Cindy Rostron** (2005-) a model, who has been named this year's young achiever at the National Indigenous Fashion Awards and who fronted the cover of VOGUE Australia in May 2022. She is admired in the fashion industry and broader creative industry for her work and is also heavily involved in supporting the Strong Women for Healthy Country Network, a way for women to see other women's country, share knowledge, culture and support each other. *"This gorgeous young woman is doing great things,"* says Alex, *"and her socials are hilarious – well worth following."* Almost 6 million people have been introduced to Rostron through her TikTok and Instagram pages.

Clive and Lily Collins nominated Yanyuwa man Pastor **Nero Timothy** (?-1984) from the Aborigines Inland Mission church at Borroloola, Northern Territory. He was greatly influential in the local community, and beyond, as a follower of Jesus and respected elder with a deep knowledge of the Yanyuwa language and culture. This knowledge made him a vital collaborator in several academic studies of indigenous language, custom and law. Clive and Lily met Nero Timothy in 1979 in Borroloola. *"It was an enormous privilege to meet by chance this gentleman and we use this description in a heartfelt manner,"* they write. *"What a gracious person, who exuded an aura of someone who was deeply devoted in serving Jesus. An indelible memory."*

Last Sunday, Rebecca Monson and Charlie Brondolino mentioned that **Grant and Kim Paulson** should be celebrated for their deadly contributions. Grant has ancestry from the Birriah, Bunjalung and Kamilaroi peoples, and has more than twenty years' experience in designing and implementing community engagement and social development programs in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. He and Kim were former members of Canberra Baptist Church and have many connections here.

Speaking of people who are part of our church, Kathy Joyce also wanted to nominate **Stephanie Evans**. Steph is a Wiradjuri woman currently finishing her law degree at the ANU. She also has a strong interest in theatre production and an amazing history in environmental advocacy – at age 10 she established Seas of Change, an Australian organisation that raised funds and awareness for marine conservation efforts! Kathy writes, *"Steph inspires and impresses me every time she speaks in church..... Steph obviously doesn't just speak but puts her beliefs into action. I am sure she is making a big difference in her community."*

Thirteen more people to think of when you think about '50 years of deadly' this NAIDOC Week!

On Sunday we will be praying a prayer written by Safina Stewart from Common Grace, but here's an excerpt from it:

Faithful Redeemer, we thank you for the strength, beauty, resilience, and wisdom of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We celebrate the gifts of culture, language, storytelling, art, leadership, faith, and community. We give thanks for Elders who guide, for young people who carry culture forward, and for all who work to build stronger futures.

Thank you for reminding us to think about what is best in one another: whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—whatever is excellent or praiseworthy.

May we be people who recognise and celebrate these gifts wherever we see them.

Lord Jesus, help us walk together in your love.

Amen!

Belinda