



Dear Friends,

Aron and I spent the weekend in Melbourne where I had the great pleasure of preaching at St Kilda Baptist Church on Sunday.

We bring you warm greetings from the folk at St Kilda – as well as from Sepideh and Mehdi, Nathan Linton-Owies, and Cecelia, Sam, Annabelle, and Jordan! It was a good weekend of catching up with people!

Close to our hotel, in Parliament Gardens, was the magnificent bronze statue of Pastor Sir Douglas and Lady Gladys Nicholls, and I had the pleasure of telling Aron a little bit about their wonderful work and legacy.

As it says on the Monument Australia website

(<https://www.monumentaustralia.org/themes/people/indigenous/display/94800-pastor-sir-douglas-and-lady-gladys-nicholls->):

Sir Douglas Nicholls (1906 - 1988) was the pastor of Australia's first Aboriginal Church of Christ, in Fitzroy, Melbourne.... He worked as a lay preacher at the Gore Street Mission Centre from 1935, but he really began working with disadvantaged Aboriginal people in the early 1940s through the Aboriginal Advancement League. In 1968, he was awarded an OBE for his work and became a member of the new Victorian Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs. In 1972, he was the first Aboriginal person to be knighted, and four years later he became the governor of South Australia.

Like her husband, Gladys Nicholls (1906 -1981) was born at Cummeragunga Aboriginal station in New South Wales. After the death of her first husband, Howard Nicholls, in 1942, Gladys married his brother Doug. She was committed to working towards the welfare of the underprivileged, as well as for the rights of women. Gladys was a charity worker and fundraiser, and among other achievements became secretary of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Council and the Victorian state president in the 1970s.

Together the Nicholls were prominent campaigners for Indigenous rights and justice, and it is the first memorial sculpture in Melbourne dedicated to Aboriginal leaders

What Monument Australia does not mention (*but having spent just a brief time in Victoria, I feel bound to mention*) is that Nicholls also played for Northcote Football Club and was a member of Northcote's 1929 premiership team. In 1932 he joined the Fitzroy Football Club, playing six seasons, was the first Aboriginal player to play for the interstate team. He returned to Northcote as non-playing coach in 1947. He was also a capable sprinter and boxer.

But it is for Pastor Sir Douglas and Lady Gladys Nicholls' work for Aboriginal people, and the challenges they faced in their Christian ministry and government roles and pioneering campaigning for justice for which they will be honoured for their *deadly* contribution to Australia.

In Aboriginal communities, *deadly* is a term of high praise. It describes something or someone as excellent, inspiring, strong, and worthy of celebration. And the theme of NAIDOC Week, which begins this Sunday, is **50 Years of Deadly**, honouring 50 years of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people whose gifts, leadership, and achievements have inspired those around them and those who have come after them.

As the Common Grace team and Safina Stewart write, "*When we celebrate **50 Years of Deadly**, we honour the Elders, advocates, artists, leaders, and communities who have carried this movement forward, and we recognise the many ways Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to stand strong despite ongoing racism, injustice, violence, and the silencing of their voices.*"

As Christians, this theme echoes the invitation of Philippians 4:8: **'Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things.'**

In other words, think about what is deadly."

During NAIDOC Week we are encouraged to think about what is *deadly* – and the *deadly* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders we have known or who have inspired us. Common Grace are partnering with CityLife Church to ask Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, 'What makes your Mob so deadly?' and sharing this video with us during NAIDOC Week.

Could we make a little NAIDOC Week contribution of our own? Can I ask you to send me an email (belinda@canbap.org) this week (before next Wednesday, 8th July) with the name, and a brief description, of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait person you think of when you think of **50 Years of Deadly? (You can also check out the **NAIDOC Award nominees for 2026**, and **previous years** - <https://www.naidoc.org.au/> - and be inspired!)**

Let us celebrate **50 Years of Deadly** this **NAIDOC Week 2026!**

Grace and peace,

Belinda

PS If you would like to unsubscribe from this weekly email please contact office@canbap.org

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